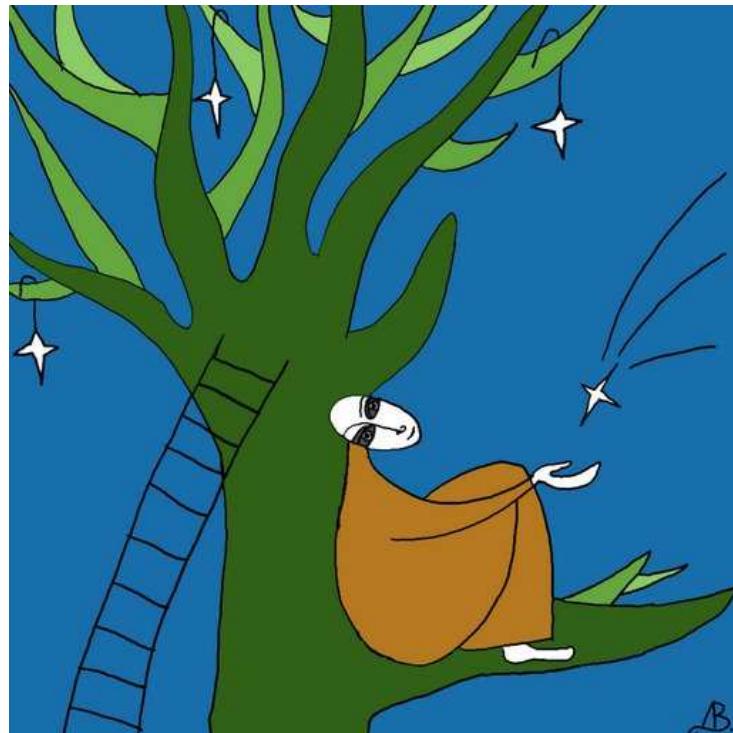


# **Living Peace: the open space of our lives**

by Open Space Technology facilitators  
from around the world

edited by  
Raffi Aftandelian



an initial consideration of the personal practice of open space



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to my parents, Elie and Rouben  
my brother, Sergei

and all beings



# Table of Contents

An introduction and the seeds of this book .....	8
What is Open Space Technology (OST)?.....	12
Open Space as a Spiritual Practice.....	15
Harrison Owen	
Opening Space as a Practice of Peace .....	21
Anne M. Stadler	
The Harmony Project.....	27
Birgitt and Ward Williams	
Living in Invitation ~ The Experience of Grace Immersion .....	31
Zelle Nelson and Maureen McCarthy	
What It Means to Me.....	38
Ralph Copleman	
<i>Being the Open Space of Peace</i> .....	40
Arun Wakhlu	
Inventing ways *	45
Alan Stewart, PhD	
Life as an Invitation: Living in Family in Open Space .....	48
Caitlin Frost (as lived with Chris Corrigan, Aine Corrigan-Frost and Finn Corrigan-Frost.)	
Living in Open Space .....	56
Michael Herman	
Living in Peace with my office equipment - a love letter.....	58
Jo Toepfer	
The Next Generation.....	60
Michael Pannwitz	
Accepting what is.....	61
Catherine Pfaehler-Senn	

Open Space - Living with Greater Simplicity and Happiness .....	62
Diane Gibeault	
What is living in open space? .....	64
Doug Germann	
“What is your practice of Open Space?” .....	66
Eva P Svensson	
Living peace.....	69
Florian Fischer	
[untitled] .....	70
Olga Zolotareva	
Living peace.....	71
Raffi Aftandelian	
What do we do with the invitation we don’t want to hear? .....	73
Wendy Farmer-O’Neil	
Appendices.....	78
Four Practices for Living Peace .....	79
Michael Herman	
Contributor Biographies .....	82
Resources .....	94



## An introduction and the seeds of this book

From a very early age, perhaps from the age of 9, when I experienced the chaos of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the war with Iraq that followed, I have been fascinated by the question of attaining peace, creating peace, living in peace. This led me from my time in high school to be involved in different political and social causes.

Later, after graduating college in a discipline that has gone through some name changes- Soviet Studies- emblematic, perhaps, of the time we live in, I fell into training, facilitation, and mediation. Yes, I was initially quite excited by the experience of ostensible personal transformation through workshop participation. And yes, I co-trained dozens of people in running peacemaking workshops throughout the world. Deep down, however, there was this feeling of dissatisfaction with the work. I didn't have words for it until years later.

Now, I'd heard of Open Space Technology (the next section is a (very) whirlwind description of the approach if you have never experienced OST) back in the mid-nineties. While living in a [co-op household](#) in South Berkeley, fellow housemate [Kenoli Oleari](#) offhandedly shared his delight about the method over a breakfast of slightly burnt homemade granola and soymilk. The description was very threadbare - it didn't even get as far as a 100% post-consumer recycled napkin doodle -, but I knew instantly that this was something I wanted to investigate further. At that time, I even participated in an ecologically-themed conference without realizing that elements of the technology were being used.

It was not until 2001, while living in Russia, that there was an opportunity to receive formal training in this approach from OST pioneer [Birgitt Williams](#). The workshop changed me. It wasn't a conversion experience. I'd call it more a "I'm very, very intrigued, let's give this a go experience." It took running ten OST meetings, some of them more than two days long, and then seeing the results of the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting to finally be able to rest easy and believe that yes, "running" a very productive, breakthrough meeting on a topic that people really care about *can* be as simple as giving 15 minutes (or less) of instructions, then going off to take a nap, and later just picking up coffee cups and sitting around.

The clincher for me about this method is that it lets people get their work done quickly, productively while at the same time *inviting them to be themselves*. There are no rules regulating the way people should behave. You are invited to show up "as is," not as you ought to be. And talk and engage with people about what you care about.

Some seven years later, after some formal training in OST, and seeing the approach work in all kinds of situations has led to all kinds of deeper thinking about OST and the open space of our lives.

### *The OSlist*

A huge support in deepening my own connection with others intrigued by this approach has been the electronic discussion list for Open Space Technology, [OSlist](#). OSlist, I've thought of at times, as a vast electronic playground for exploring Spirit and open space in their many forms and essences. The (friendly, thoughtful) conversations have almost always been lively, often taking us to new and unexpected places. There, I first met the people who were inspirations for this book, [Chris Corrigan](#), [Michael Herman](#), and [Wendy Farmer-O'Neil](#).

A few years ago Chris and Michael had a conversation which made it into note form in different iterations available online as “The Four Practices of Open Space” (a latest version of this distillation of these exchanges is included here in the appendix). It was this framing of OS (the lens, not just the technology) as a practice- for individuals, organizations, and communities- that was a key breakthrough. And it was the many conversations on the listserv and conversations with Wendy that have helped me glimpse the delightful (and deceptive?) simplicity and awesome complexity of living in Open Space.

One fine morning a few years ago, a question popped up in my head: “Can we call Open Space a global, emergent spiritual tradition?” This was the first iteration of the convening question for this book. Some people understood that OS is a spiritual practice as early as the mid-eighties. Many say that OS is or is part of their spiritual or life practice. But what does that mean in practice? What does that look like? And why is this important?

Harrison wrote [The Practice of Peace](#) a few years ago, outlining how the application of OST and living the principles underpinning OST in organizations and communities is a practice of peace.

Yet, curiously, there has been no book that speaks directly to the question of what have we as Open Space Technology facilitators learned about living in Open Space.

So, *Living Peace* is a first attempt at looking this question by asking the following questions explicitly and implicitly:

- What does living in Open Space as a practice of peace look like?
- What does Open Space as a daily practice of personal leadership look like?
- Twenty-odd years on, what have we/I learned about living in Open Space? And why might that be relevant and important to the world?

- What body of wisdom do we as Open Space Technology facilitators hold and share about living in peace?

Exciting and scary questions! There's no doubt that Open Space Technology as a meeting method works. Its spread around the world can mostly be credited to the strength of approach itself, its own merits. And if indeed Open Space is a personal practice, what does that body of wisdom and experience look like? What is the next set of questions that seek to be asked about living in OS?

### *Invitation*

The contributors for this book responded to an open invitation extended to all who'd worked with OST. They were invited to write a piece in any form responding to the question, "What is your personal practice of Open Space?"

### *The contributions*

I'd like to express deep gratitude to the contributors for the diverse approaches to the question. My hope was to receive pieces that would reflect both the geographic scope of OST's application and a wide range of experience. Indeed, there are pieces here from Canada, Sweden, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, Hong Kong, India, Russia, and the USA. Contributors include those who were with OST from the very beginning to those who came to the approach just two years ago.

They include Harrison Owen's personal journey to Open Space and the larger implications he has found it has for all co-humans (a term offered by Korean OST facilitator Stanley Park). Anne Stadler shares her own journey into and through Open Space, sharing some practice tools. Birgitt and Ward Williams extend an invitation to join them in opening and holding space for harmony in the world. Zelle Nelson and Maureen McCarthy extend an invitation to their home, which operates in Open Space, and share a practice tool for personal and professional they have been elaborating called the "State of Grace Document." Ralph Copleman's poem is an engaging, passionate, deeply personal consideration of living in Open Space. Arun Wakhlu shares his understanding of what it means to be one's whole self...an open space of peace, wisdom and love. He shares a poem to realize and live this. Alan Stewart writes of his journey to Open Space and offers quotations which elaborate his understanding of the practice. Caitlin Frost describes what it looks like to live as a family with two children in Open Space. Michael Herman writes of how he came to Open Space and how he lives in it from day to day. Jo Toepfer tackles an unexpected question on living in Open Space with one's office equipment. The piece essentially seeks to respond to a little-discussed question, "How can we live the practice of Open Space when our experience is mediated more and more by electronic technologies hatched in a dominance-based paradigm?" Michael Pannwitz offers the most succinct and possibly hands-on answer in this collection. Catherine Pfaehler Senn tells the story of how Open Space has helped her to live through tremendous personal tragedy.

Diane Gibeault writes how Open Space has helped her live a more satisfying life by learning to let go. Doug Germann's prose-poem further elucidates what it means practically to engage with the world as an Open Space practice. Eva Svensson writes of her personal journey to Open Space, its fruits and vicissitudes. Florian Fischer, an OSlist poet-laureate, shares a delightful poem. I offer a poem and set of practice questions. Olga Zolotareva shares how Open Space as a worldview has helped her be herself more. And finally, Wendy Farmer-O'Neil writes very personally of the invitations we don't want to hear.

Thank you to Jeff Aitken and others for honing the language of the initial invitation. A thanks to Ludmila Ivanova for translating the invitation into Russian.

A deep bow of gratitude to all the contributors. It has been a pleasure and honor to work with them on this project and to see their wisdom and experience reflected on these pages.

Finally, I'd like to thank Vera "Dyomka" Vakulenko for her cover illustration.

#### *A (k)no(w)te on style, grammar, and syntax*

Many of the contributions in this book are written by people for whom English is not their native tongue yet who work with this language regularly. Perhaps they have made English their own on their own terms? Where it seemed to served the larger purpose of the book - developing an understanding of what it means to live in Open Space - I have edited for grammer, spelng, and sintax. I have intentionally not sought to make this a polished or perfect piece in part to let the voices come through as they r. Might the confusion and unexpected interpretations of the texts allow for (k)newer understandings?

#### *A further invitation?*

My hope for this book is that it will take the conversation about the personal practice of Open Space further and inspire deeper inquiry into the question of living in Open Space. Perhaps more books will follow? One of the things I hoped to include in this book is the perspective of those who think that Open Space Technology is *just* an excellent meeting method, full stop. Perhaps this ostensibly contrary perspective might find expression in a later book?

This book is available for free download at [livingpeace.ws](http://livingpeace.ws) Please feel free to contact me directly for your feedback, thoughts, and ideas about how we might take this conversation further. You are more than welcome to post your comments at the website. I can be reached at email at [raffi@bk.ru](mailto:raffi@bk.ru) and [raffi\\_1970@yahoo.com](mailto:raffi_1970@yahoo.com) and skype (raffi\_1970) or by phone at +1 858.736.4611

## What is Open Space Technology (OST)?

There are many ways of describing Open Space Technology meeting. Below is just one description. Feel free to explore how others talk about the approach [here](#).

In short, Open Space Technology is a very simple, powerful way of holding highly productive and inspiring meetings, conferences, and other learning events for groups of 5 to 2,000 or more. OST works best when all of the following elements are present: a real issue people care about, a diverse group of interested people, a high level of complexity, conflict (a form of passion), and when decision time is now. People come to OST events often in response to an open invitation to a meeting. This is a meeting with no prior set agenda. All who care (passionately) about the theme of the meeting show up and sit in a circle. The sponsor of the event may say a few welcoming words, after which the facilitator gives no more than 15 minutes of instructions, framing the invitation and explaining how the group is invited to work.

The facilitator explains that anyone who cares to may announce a topic (or topics) to discuss in sessions. Participants are invited to go to the center of the circle, write their session topic on a sheet of paper, write their name (indicating they are taking responsibility for convening the session and also take responsibility for there to be a written session report if the organizers intended for there to be written proceedings from the event). Then the participant announces the topic to the group and posts it on the Community Bulletin Board. Together the group creates the agenda, the Community Bulletin Board, by posting the session topics on a wall (marked with a sign, “Village Marketplace”), indicating the time and place of each session with a post-it. The post-its are taken from a “Time-space” matrix. Each post-it indicates the time and place for the session.

After that, the Board becomes the Village Marketplace, which is opened for participants to determine what they want to participate in. And then they get to work in self-organizing concurrent groups. People manage their own time, space, and energy. They may choose to “bumblebee” from one concurrent session to another, cross-pollinating the conversations in the different groups. Or they might choose to be “butterflies” and just stand (or sit) at the tables with tea, coffee, and other refreshments that are available throughout the OST meeting, often described as a nonstop coffee break. Sessions might have reports posted on a wall (marked with a sign “Breaking News”), which may be later used for a convergence phase, to plan future actions. At the end, the group gathers in a circle to share reflections, learnings, and anything else they care to.

OST works on one Law, the Law of Two Feet:

*“If you feel like you are neither learning nor contributing, you are responsible to use you your two feet and leave, perhaps move to another group.”*

This is how life seems to always work, whether or not we like it. Even if we are in an unsatisfying situation and don't think we can leave, our body might stay, but our head, heart, and spirit most likely have taken off in a red hot Ferrari! The Law is sometimes expressed as

*“take responsibility for what you love”*

And there are four principles, some call them The Facts of Life:

- Whoever comes is the right people.
- Whenever it starts is the right time.
- When it's over, it's over.
- Whatever happens is the only thing that could have.

Essentially, they are an invitation to appreciate and trust the resources of the group to get the work done in the time and space available. And, to let go.

What, then, are the results of such a gathering? The results may vary depending on the length and aims of the meeting. Typically a 2-2.5 day meeting have the following results:

- Anything that anyone cares enough about is on the table.
- All issues will be discussed as much or as little as people care to.
- All conversations will be captured in a proceedings document, to be made available immediately to the participants.
- All issues will be prioritized, related issues will be converged.
- And responsibility will be taken for next step actions.

Often, depending on the circumstance, a follow-up meeting with the sponsor, the facilitator, and the organizing team, up to a week later to assess the results of the meeting, to reflect on it, and to determine how to support the ideas, projects, and new questions that were born at the event. Another follow-up meeting may follow 4-6 months later to assess long-term results.

OST, since it was born 23 years ago, has been used hundreds of thousands of times in just about every conceivable organizational and community context in over a hundred countries. Sometimes OST is described as a healing practice, like yoga, for organizations. To think of OST as a kind of yoga may also help explain why it is still seen as something exotic and mysterious. Yoga has been around for several thousand years, yet it has become something almost ubiquitous in the Western world perhaps only in the last 20 years. OST, much like yoga a number of years ago, arguably is starting to be seen as a common

practice in some pockets of the world, in small and large corporations, in government, in communities, and in nonprofit organizations.

OST is sometimes described as a means of inviting Spirit back into the organization and the organization back to Spirit. The story is unfinished...

*Acknowledgements: Harrison Owen, Birgitt Williams, Chris Corrigan, Michael Herman, Peggy Holman, Michael Pannwitz, and Lisa Heft.*

## Open Space as a Spiritual Practice

Harrison Owen

Although I have written much on the subject of Spirit <sup>1</sup>, I have never been able to define it. Then again, I have never felt any particular need to. My experience, shared by many I believe, has been that we know Spirit when we meet, and no precise definition is necessary, or even particularly useful. We know that when Spirit is present in a group of people, wonderful things can happen. We also know that when Spirit is somehow absent or flagging, no amount of money in the bank, technology in the backroom, or executive talent on the roster makes much difference - nothing really seems to go right.

Of course there are times when precise statements about the quality and nature of Spirit are important, but in the work-a-day world, it is usually sufficient to acknowledge the presence of Spirit, by whatever name. Call it what you like - team spirit, esprit de corps, Great Spirit of the Cosmos - sooner or later they all connect. I think. But the critical thing is to acknowledge Spirit when we meet, and somehow summon it again when it is absent.

For me, quite simply, Spirit is the most important thing in my life, my work, and in the organizations I serve. When it is present, I experience power, flow, and endless possibilities. When Spirit goes on a holiday, it is a dull day indeed. I do not think I am alone. So allowing (inviting, encouraging) Spirit to show up is not an incidental consideration.

One might even say that I am hooked on Spirit. Indeed, it seems to be a life long addiction. As a young adult, the symptoms were largely “negative,” manifesting as something I was missing. I didn’t know what I was missing, but I did know that something of import was absent from my life. I suppose you could call this the beginning of a Spiritual journey, but to be honest, if felt much more like an attempted prison break.

I think it had a lot to do with the ‘50s. I went to the “right” preparatory school, followed by the “right” college, Eisenhower was in the White House, and everything was supposedly “right” with the world. Of course Kerouac was on the road, and the Beats were following a different path, but I seemed to be locked in a jail not of my making. And frankly, I just wanted Out - some room to breath.

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<sup>1</sup> My first book, written now almost 20 years ago and published in 1987, was called quite simply *Spirit: Transformation and Development in Organizations*,(Abbott Publishing, 1987).. My most recent book ,*The Power of Spirit: How Organizations Transform*,( Berrett-Koehler, 2000) revisits much of the same territory, with hopefully some new insights.

My initial attempt at opening some doors and windows for my life might seem odd, I became a priest (Episcopalian). If this sounds like an “out of the fat - into the fire” sort of thing, the reality was quite different. Indeed the Church (or at least the Episcopal Church), was one of the few places where thinking and doing different sorts of things was allowed, and to some degree actually encouraged. Within limits, of course. Wearing a clerical collar can be restrictive, but I found the immediate alternative of a grey flannel suit, uniform of the corporate world, to be infinitely less attractive.

The first edition of my life plan turned out to be short lived. The 60's and the Civil Rights movement burst in and I traded parish life for city streets, first in the deep South and then in our nation's capitol. In quick succession I turned organizer for civil rights demonstrations, directed a community action organization, created urban programs for Peace Corps in West Africa, conceived and managed patient, public and professional education programs for the National Institutes of Health, and concluded with my last honest job as a political appointee in the Carter administration. Since then, I've been a consultant.

The good news has been the bountiful opportunity for thinking and doing all sorts of different things. But I was still looking for Spirit. And Spirit came in a most unexpected way as the gift of two martinis.

### **The Gift of Two Martinis**

The story may be briefly told. In 1983 several colleagues (including our illustrious editor, Peter Vaill) and I organized what became known as The First International Symposium on Organization Transformation. In those benighted days, Transformation was a familiar phenomenon in the worlds of physics, esoterica, and psychology - but never to be thought of in relation to organizations, and especially those hard nosed critters called corporations. After a year's hard work the Symposium rolled out with 250 participants and a panoply of speakers, workshops and panels. But much to my surprise and chagrin, the best parts were the coffee breaks, and all the rest seemed an interruption to the main event... the coffee breaks. So much for one year's work.

Two years later, I agreed to host the 3<sup>rd</sup> iteration of the Symposium (we are now at #26), but with the caveat that never again would I create all the organizational minutia associated with the standard conference. I was also clear that I hadn't a clue how we would actually proceed. And so the martinis.

The first martini got me through the ego-shock caused by the realization that one year's work had largely been wasted on creating interruptions to the all powerful coffee breaks. And with the second, I began to meditate on possible alternatives. My mind drifted to experiences in West African bush

villages where I had noticed that people seemed to gather with ease, elegance and a minimum of up-front arrangement - and their secret seemed to lie in the fact that they always sat in a circle. Perhaps, I thought, if we were to start in a circle... but then, what would we do? The image of a bulletin board came to mind upon which might be posted all the things that people wished to explore. That done, a market place might provide the means and opportunity to make the necessary time/space arrangements for groups to gather. And just about then the gin ran out.

Four months later, 65 intrepid souls met in Monterey CA for the Third International Symposium on Organization Transformation. We began in a circle, and in a very short time had completely organized a 5 day meeting from scratch. It worked, much to the surprise of all. But more than simply "work," there was a quality in the working which I could only describe as inspiring or ... Spirited. Something quite different had happened, and we called it Open Space Technology.

Obviously, the discovery of ways to Spirit is not a novel undertaking. Indeed, every religion, to say nothing of all the esoteric practices have been engaged in the process. I have never thought of Open Space as a religion, although some of my colleagues and critics are not so sure. But as a *practice*, I have found Open Space to be very rewarding.<sup>2</sup> And we desperately need effective practices.

The recent interest in Spirituality, and more particularly, Spirituality in organizations and businesses is interesting, and maybe even beneficial, but I find much of the emphasis to be more appropriate to the head than to the heart or Soul. Many words *about* Spirit, but somehow Spirit never really seems to show up. So I must ask - Where's the Beef? What's the practice?

The list of practices, possible and actual, is virtually infinite. But most, indeed all that I can think of, apply to the individual. The notion is, each person must find their practice, pursue it, and thereby (and usually after a very long time) achieve enlightenment in some form or another. And enlightenment, of course, is but another way of talking about a direct encounter with Spirit. All well and good. But what about large groups of people? And what about the time available? After all there are 6 billion of us on the planet, with another 4-5 billion arriving soon. To the extent that enlightenment, or if you prefer, a direct and meaningful encounter with Spirit is essential for a full and truly productive life (and I think it is), we have a lot, and probably an impossible

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<sup>2</sup> A full discussion of the distinction between a religion and a practice require more space than this short piece allows. But very simply a religion includes a whole mess of things such as dogma, ritual, mythology and practices. Practices, on the other hand are usually very sparse and direct. In essence, they are injunctions - Do this, and such and such will follow. The statement of a practice is usually quite simple. Carrying it out effectively may take a lifetime.

amount of work ahead of us. There are neither the teachers nor the time to pursue such a goal in any foreseeable future.

Please do not mis-understand me. I am by no means suggesting that the multiple individual practices are without merit. They have been, and will remain an essential part of the human journey. It is just that I believe we need something in addition. And Open Space may be such an addition, or at least a reasonable start.

### **Open Space as a Personal Practice**

If it is possible for groups to experience Spirit in immediate and direct ways in Open Space, so also for the individual. And personally, I have been a major beneficiary. Over the 15 years since Open Space was first done, it has been an amazing journey.

The learnings have been many, but two stand out in particular. First, it is all about letting go. We have discovered, through countless pointed lessons, that there is precisely one way to mess up an Open Space - and only one way. And that is to think that you are in charge of what happens, or worse yet, to act that way. Truthfully, the facilitator has little if anything of a substantive nature to contribute. No fixes, no interventions - or at least not of an obvious sort. For a brief time at the beginning, the facilitator holds center stage (literally), and then it is essential to get out of the way.

For me, as for most of my friends and colleagues, being charge, taking control, was the be all and end all of a proper manager - by whatever name. And if we weren't in charge, then surely somebody had to be. We became quite skilled at developing marvelous designs for training and other work, timed down to 5 minute intervals with precise instructions for who, what, where, when and how. We knew that things didn't always work as we hoped, but we had the idea - the perfect span of control would be realized, the optimal organization set in place. If not today, then tomorrow for sure.

The stakes involved much more than professional skill. It was really about image and self-esteem. Those who were in charge ruled, and to be out of control was, typically, to be out of a job. Giving up the one thing that seemingly defined me as me (at least in a professional sense) seemed a little much.

I can't say that I achieved my objective all in one fell swoop. Truthfully, I did not fully realize how deeply the urge for control had rooted itself in my daily life and professional practice. However, by taking things one step at a time, not unlike the twelve step approach to breaking any addictive behavior, useful things happened. My approach was quite straight forward. Each time I have the privilege of Opening Space for some group, I would think of one more

thing *not* to do. Some little intervention, bell, or whistle was laid to one side. “Ice breaking” exercises disappeared. Warm up, creativity inducing programs were put down. To my surprise, as each layer was peeled off, the function of the group suffered not a whit. Indeed, it only got better.

The hardest part of letting go was to put to one side the self-expectation that in the event of conflict, it was my job in life to intervene and fix it. I found, however that in the (usually) unlikely event that my intervention was effective, the group would look at me with some kind of wonder, forgetting totally that they were the ones who were wonderful. And of course, if I failed miserably, the group would blame me, and forget that I did not have a conflict - that it was not my problem to be solve.

The story is by no means complete, and each Open Space I find there is something else to let go of. But now I am finding that what began in Open Space has great application in my daily life. The world was not designed for my pleasure and dominion (surprise) and to the extent that I spend my waking hours trying to get everything in order, I waste an awful lot of time and energy. This is not about throwing my hands up in futility and abdication - but about learning at a very experiential level that life lived in harmony and flow (albeit with a few bumps) is a very full life indeed.

My second major learning falls generally under the heading of Collective Consciousness. I am not totally clear what Collective Consciousness might be, but I do know that very quickly in every Open Space I have participated in - corporate identity emerges which is infinitely more than the sum of the individual parts. Over arching themes manifest in the several discussions, and nobody ever made an obvious effort to focus the attention of the group. Should the group be stressed by some unanticipated happening, it will often respond as a whole in what appears to be a very rational, and sometimes very elegant fashion. What is noteworthy is that nobody did it - in the sense that nobody convened some form of consensus development. It seems to happen all by itself.

As the facilitator, I have learned that it is essential to “tune in” to this apparently subtle level of being. The overt details of discussion and behavior may vary widely at a level of complexity that simply boggles the mind. But the core flow of consciousness (if I can use the terms) is the primary object of my concern. I do not even have to be in the room, and I become quite aware of the on-going happenings of the moment. All of this might be ascribed to powers of intuition, but having conjured up that wonderful faculty, I am not sure the discussion has been advanced substantially. My experience is rather that of being a silent witness to the flow of consciousness. I feel neither blame nor judgement. Perhaps more interesting, there is no feeling or desire to change a thing. It all appears to be happening quite perfectly.

## A Conclusion of Sorts

Open space, and Spirit shows up. That has been my experience, which seems to be shared by a multitude of my colleagues. The effect of Spirit in a group of people is profound, yielding results that are often termed unbelievable, magic, and sometimes weird. But at the end of the day, the observable results are perhaps the least significant. At a deeper level, I believe Open Space to be a Practice through which it is possible for groups and individuals to encounter Spirit up close and personal. Not vague abstractions, nice ideas about... but the real thing. Right here. Right now.

*Adapted from “[Open Space and Spirit Shows Up](#)”*

## Opening Space as a Practice of Peace

Anne M. Stadler

There's an elephant in the room! Whether it's your living room, or the Board room or the halls of government, fear is a shadow presence, as many of us wake up to the fact that as a species, we are dealing with extinction-level issues. It is not business as usual! We are being called to our cosmic mission: evolve toward life.

How do I embrace this awareness? How do I participate in none-other-than the evolution of human consciousness as I live my normal daily life? The pressure for that is quickening.

There is a lively conversation about "co-creation", "emergence", and "collective wisdom", which crosses professional boundaries, engaging scientists as well as organizational consultants, musicians, psychologists, and spiritual leaders. And it is clear that all are affected. There's no "there" anymore...everything is here and now.

Fundamental to these conversations is a call to practice peace.

In some ways, I have been practicing peace since 1958, when my husband, Dave, and I joined friends to organize the first peace march in our hometown of Seattle. For the following fourteen years, until 1972, I was deeply engaged in peace work, as a co-Founder of several broadly based coalitions working to end war. I focused my efforts locally, nationally and internationally, building capacity for solutions that would mobilize political, social and economic action—of governments, and of non-governmental organizations.

From 1973 to 1990, I worked as a television producer for KING-TV, an NBC affiliate. My job was to help community groups educate the public about improving the quality of life in our region. Since we are a port city, linked to the Pacific Rim and beyond-- "our" quality of life included creating a world of law, expanding economic opportunity and trade. Our city had many Sister City relationships around the planet. So several of the special programs I produced focused on international security, world trade, and finally, eleven co-produced programs with Soviet Television, as the USSR opened up during glasnost and perestroika.

I assumed that practicing peace happens in the rough and tumble of the world of politics, community and corporate life.

That changed after 1989! I've now realized that for me practicing peace is actually living the essence of open space: the Law of Two Feet, taking

**responsibility** for what love calls me to do. It is the practice of Self-organizing, living as a connection to the field of universal intelligence or spirit. Here's a brief sketch of the NOW I am living in, and how I got here.

In 1989, I stumbled into Open Space Technology, literally and figuratively! The setting was Goa, India. And from the moment Harrison Owen wrote the Law of Two Feet up on the wall in his prep school backhand print, I was called. There were no books, no workshops. I had no idea how to work with OST, except to open up to whatever presented itself.

At that time, in the early 90s, Harrison Owen was a fellow learner. So we offered OST learning expeditions, in the form of "trainings" that explored the edges of his knowledge, and "trained" all of us in the mysteries of opening space.

In watching what happened when conflicting perspectives met each other in Open Space, I realized that OST provided the perfect medium for conflict. Everyone who came was welcome. Everyone was invited to take responsibility for what they love. So whoever were attracted to a particular topic were exactly the people who cared enough to take responsibility for it. If they weren't engaged and contributing, they were also invited to step away and go to a place where they could contribute. OST provided the time and place for fruitful exchange to happen, exactly WHEN it needed to happen with exactly the RIGHT people!

Given that this is a feature of opening space, I began to see that my inner space was critical to the space I opened for others. It can be a pretty bumpy ride, when there are people in a group that bug you, the facilitator!! And that happened –especially to begin with-- when I was insecure and feeling like a novice.

I realized that to open space from a lively, yet peaceful and centered place, I needed an internal compass—a compass I could always access, in the moment, not only in meditation or solitude. I needed to live in Rumi's place: "the field beyond ideas of right and wrong."

### **Finding my Compass:**

Observing my colleagues and myself, I realized that every emerging possibility, for an individual or a group, shows up as some kind of frisson. It often takes the form of a frustration, an anxiety, a fear. It could be an unexpected invitation - just what you've always wanted, your dream come true. But whether it is positive or negative, you feel disturbed.

You experience it as if it were an "emergency". I realized emergency has the same root as "emergence", so there is a sense, as in any emergency, of

something breaking through. And initially, your immune system mobilizes to reject the intruder, i.e. the possibility makes you feel uncomfortable. An emergence is essentially a disturbance that tells you that the boundary of your current life has been breached.

To deal with the stress of emergence, I used focused meditations to access my inner knowing. I would ask:

“Regarding, X, please tell me what belief system is being activated within me?” Then I would learn about whatever it was, using all my channels of awareness. And I would embrace the new awareness and release the belief. Gradually my attitude began to change from judgment to fascination.

Whenever I stopped resisting what was happening right in front of me, and saw it simply as a juicy learning moment, using a technique of inner opening I stepped into the field beyond ideas of right and wrong...the place in myself of “Yes!”

Most significantly, my attitude toward the unexpected changed from “Oh, No”... to “Yes...But”, to “Yes...And?”

In conversations with Prasad Kaipa, who was studying how people learn, I created a theory about the value of disturbance, about what was happening in me as an individual, and what happens in groups, as well. I noticed that disturbance, rather than being a problem, is actually a knock on the door. The more I resist the knock, the louder it becomes and the more suffering I experience. As I resist, I can experience not only “lurching” but also “breakdown” However, as soon as I say Yes! and pay attention to the knock, the way opens. The resources and opportunities for learning and integration emerge—as if by magic.

**The Guest House**, by Rumi, describes all of this perfectly:

This being human is a guest house.  
Every morning a new arrival.  
A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
Some momentary awareness comes  
As an unexpected visitor.  
Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,  
who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,  
still greet each guest honorably.  
He may be clearing you out  
For some new delight.  
The dark thought, the shame, the malice,  
Meet them at the door laughing,

And invite them in.  
Be grateful for whoever comes  
Because each has been sent  
As a guide from beyond.

In order to open space in the world, it became clear I needed to live it myself. By living the Law of Two Feet I began to love myself, love whatever I had been and release the feelings of guilt and fear that blocked my knowing what truly had heart and meaning for me. Taking responsibility for love meant choosing life, evolving toward life, consciously opening to Spirit.

**A practice for reuniting with my compass:**

I also began to re-discover what I had to offer from my life of work and study, which included a substantial grounding in transpersonal psychology. I had cultivated an inner work spiritual practice for a number of years, so I had some skill at looking inside, rather than outside, for my compass.

Whenever I noticed I felt off balance or anxious, I practiced asking: “What is my Soul’s purpose in the world?” to clear a space and connect with my North Star. Information from that meditation, expressed in words, sounds, images, and movement gave me directional guidance I needed to discern what was mine to do. When opportunities came, I’d ask: “Is this what love is calling me to do?” If I got “Yes!” I’d put one foot in front of the other as I exercised the Law of Two Feet. And I began to treat everything that came up as an opportunity for learning.

As I found opportunities to work with an increasing number of groups, I noticed that the Open Space mantras (Take responsibility for what you love, Whoever comes are the right people, Whatever happens is the only thing that could’ve, When it starts is the right time, When it’s over...it’s over.) were a great help in opening the doors of inner space--for myself as well as others, particularly in the disturbing moments of participating in group life.

For example, my coaching in groups often centers on helping someone who feels marginalized or ignored. Someone will come up to me with a discomfort or a question about someone who is bugging her. By hearing, seeing, and loving her, I show her she and the person who bothers her are the right people to learn from each other, and we discover what she has to offer, and how she can do so with power and purpose. In the course of our conversation, we discover what we have to learn from each other, how we can help each other—practicing peace in the moment.

I’ve been opening space consciously since 1989. My observation is that these simple practices are the foundation for living open space, rather than simply using it as a facilitating tool. As I’ve witnessed their application in many

different situations around the world, I've realized they in fact are the practice of peace.

Returning to my first statement: the practice of peace is a practice of Self-organizing: In opening space, we open ourselves to a higher order field of consciousness: through the Self, Spirit manifests in the material world. Whoever you are attracted to, arguing with, angry at, IS the right person—the person or situation best suited NOW for the learning you need, and the whole needs, AND, whatever happens is the product of your capacity to take responsibility for love in the here and now...practicing peace.

Ease is the clue:

As I got better at paying attention to moments of possibility and welcoming emergence, I noticed that four practices helped me enter the flow of Spirit where synchronicity was the norm and practical manifestation happened.

- E. Engage with the juice.
- A. Attend to and act on what love is calling forth.
- S. Serve Spirit/Source.
- E. Effortlessly.

#### **My Tool Kit:**

I maintain a tool kit for practicing peace. It changes as I do, but right now, these elements are in my current tool kit:

- \* the practice of Fluent Communication, a simple means of living my direct connection to higher consciousness.
- \* Mark Jones's practice of hearing, seeing, loving all (see Sunyata website).
- \* meditation and prayer.
- \* The work of poets Rumi, David Whyte, Mary Oliver
- \* Thich Nhat Hanh's (the Vietnamese Buddhist monk) writings and simple practices;
- \* Angeles Arrien's works
- \* the work of David Spangler re. incarnational spirituality
- \* the publications of Harrison Owen and other OST practitioners.

To summarize:

I've noticed practicing peace through Self-organizing brings being into form by enacting these essential patterns, either for myself in my inner life or in relationship with others:

1. Inquiry: What is love calling me/us to do?
2. Inviting whoever and whatever is essential to this inquiry.

(Bringing the whole system into relationship.)

3. Bringing the circle together. And welcoming whoever is attracted (the stranger).
4. Serving the well-being of all: Acknowledging service to higher purpose and articulating that as the intention.
5. Silence and listening: Silently getting in touch with what has heart and meaning (the inner place of “Yes!”).
6. Creating a gift exchange (marketplace) of ideas and offerings: by inviting showing up for what has heart and meaning.
7. Expressing all modalities of intelligence: music, movement, graphic, intra-personal, interpersonal, including the presence of the Natural world,
8. Transparent Communication: Using an open communications medium so that all ideas and offerings can be recorded and distributed.
9. Reflecting: reconvening the whole for reflection and giving thanks.

It boils down to living from my inner place of “Yes”, hearing, seeing, loving all, being what Love calls me to do, and rejoicing in the gift exchange of Life.

And a final word from Crow

(Who arrives at the bird bath daily. Looks in, and drinks, and looks some more.)

Peering from the edge  
Of the liquid black circle,  
I see infinity.  
I see myself.  
The Circle  
Is open wide.  
There are no gateways,  
Only openings,  
Only One presence.  
Fear No-thing.  
You are all of this.  
One whole circle.  
One refraction  
Of the One light.

## The Harmony Project

Birgitt and Ward Williams

*....we followed our passion and created a global never ending OST*

We, Birgitt and Ward Williams, invited people to participate with us in intentionally creating a new reality for humanity. We had a vision that the basic premises of an Open Space Technology meeting could be applied on a grander scale, calling all humans who cared to join us, to “opening” and “holding” the space for an ongoing, global OST meeting with the purpose of “Creating opportunities for harmony”. We called this never ending OST meeting “The Harmony Project”. Since its beginning in 2001, hundreds of people have made the commitment to ‘holding space’ for opportunities for harmony in the world. In making a commitment to join us, they have committed to ‘holding’ this space for the balance of their lifetime. It is a big commitment because for each person involved, a constant thread of their personal energy is always taken up in ‘holding the space’. Further, it is a discipline that is challenging. In order to ‘hold the space’, it is essential for all who sign up to assist us in this facilitation to have no attachment to outcome. What this means is that if world events are traumatic, the facilitator ‘holding the space’ must be neutral from what is happening. Similarly, if world events are exhilarating, the facilitator must remain neutral from what is happening. This very discipline of ‘holding space’ for opportunities for harmony in the world over a lifetime evolves one’s consciousness. We caution people about taking on this commitment....once taken, there is no turning back.

You might wonder why we have undertaken this very large scale OST meeting. We believe that all of creation as we know it, is within a large Open Space created by our Creator. Within that large Open Space created by our Creator, and within the Divine Plan of our Creator, through the gift of free will, we can influence the future. We can do this by working with the universal healing energy available to us all from what some think of as Source energy, and others think of as an expanded unified morphic field. There are a number of ways of accessing this energy including prayer, meditation, yoga, hands on healing, and increasing our abilities with intuition and intuitive knowledge. Another way of accessing this energy when working with a group of people, even a very large group of people, is via the meeting method Open Space Technology. We have heard OST referred to as the ‘yoga’ of organizations.

We use terminology from this meeting methodology when we refer to “opening the space” and “holding the space” for opportunities for harmony in the world. If you are familiar with this meeting methodology, you are familiar with these terms. For people who have joined us who are not OST facilitators, we suggest

that to ‘hold the space’ they imagine themselves as resonant energy field generators, and simply use any of the ways that they are personally aware of for accessing the healing energy of the Open Space of the Universe such as prayer or meditation. Whoever makes a commitment to do this makes a lifetime commitment and joins us in what can best be viewed as creating an energy grid of love around the world. As individuals and groups, we not only create this grid but our presence here on this earth anchors this grid so that others can experience it and be influenced by it through their own intuitive knowing.

The initial invitation to participate in the Harmony Project went out June 21st, 2001 inviting people to join us in this project to begin September 21st, 2001. This invitation is continuing into the present and the future, as we commit to continually opening space for opportunities for harmony in the world. We of course, at the time the invitation was extended, did not know of the events that would come on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. Our own timing ended up being fortuitous in that people who knew about our project were deeply moved at that particular timing to joining us. The need for harmony in the world was keenly felt.

The original invitation read:

“We invite you to commit to consciously and intentionally “hold space” for harmony on the Earth beginning September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2001. On September 21<sup>st</sup>, we will go through the steps in “opening an Open Space meeting” with the theme of “Opportunities for harmony in the world”, providing opportunities and choices for nurturing life as though creation is precious and our Creator matters”. Ward and I and any guests we will have on September 21st in Raleigh, North Carolina, USA will “open space” at 7am Eastern Standard Time for this theme to be moved forward, trusting that the wisdom of the people will prevail.

“We invite you to committing to consciously “opening space” on that day, wherever you are in the world and to be willing to hold this space throughout your life, knowing that you are amongst others who are doing the same. It is our hope that enough people will join us with this intention and the consciousness of opening and holding this space, so that every hour around the clock on the 21<sup>st</sup> is covered by someone somewhere “opening and holding this space”. Please let us know if you are choosing to do so and we will add your name to the list.

“We intend with any who will join us, to hold this space for the rest of our lives so there is no anticipated end date to this “Open Space Technology meeting”. This requires of all who participate as facilitators to commit to their personal continual evolution and development to higher consciousness to enable each facilitator to hold this amount of space over the long term. Just as we would

do in facilitating an in person Open Space Technology meeting, we need to be in a state of BEING that is filled with love and trust in the wisdom of the people. Facilitating Open Space Technology meetings is sometimes exhausting, depending largely on the amount of toxicity and conflict in the group.

Facilitators who are “holding space” for the planet and all beings connected with the planet beginning on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September and ongoing need to learn to take good care of themselves and the management of their personal energy so that they do not become exhausted. This requires trust in Spirit and working with the life nurturing energy of Spirit rather than through depending on one’s own energy.

“The invitation to opening and holding space will remain open for our lifetimes, so that others can join whenever in their lives, the time is right for them. The more of us the better!”

Hundreds of people in a number of countries joined us for that first Open Space commitment. Twenty one people from nine countries were physically present in with us at our home to “open the space” and we imagined ourselves connected through an energy grid, with the hundreds of others who were opening the space with us at the same time in their location in the world. Hundreds more have joined us since that time.

Those of us who were gathered at our home for the opening of the space, created a symbolic representation of the space for opportunities for harmony in the world. We did this by placing rocks in a circle of about twenty feet in diameter, nestled in and supported by the trees. As well as the big circle of rocks, we gathered many stones and placed them in piles within the circle. These stones were dedicated as ‘seed’ stones that would gather energy from the circle to take out into the world. Every participant took a seed stone with them when they left, with the intention of using the stone as the ‘seed’ from which to make a stone circle in their own location that would energetically link with the ‘mother’ circle at our home. Over the years, we have mailed out hundreds of seed stones to people around the world who have joined us in ‘holding space for opportunities for Harmony in the world’ so that they too could create a circle that is linked to our circle.

We invite you to join us in the Harmony Project as gatherings continue to occur on March 21<sup>st</sup>, June 21<sup>st</sup>, September 21<sup>st</sup>, and December 21<sup>st</sup> throughout the world. If you choose to join the Harmony Project, let us know by e-mailing [birgitt@dalarinternational.com](mailto:birgitt@dalarinternational.com).

Blessings of love and light to you,  
Birgitt and Ward Williams



## Living in Invitation ~ The Experience of Grace Immersion

Zelle Nelson and Maureen McCarthy



We live in a 155-year-old, stone house in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Asheville, North Carolina, USA, which was originally built as the parsonage to an historic church sitting atop a hill down the road. There's a long, winding driveway through 11 acres of forest, a fireplace in every room, original hardwood floors and a spiral staircase. Obviously, it's a place to be shared. We have people stay with us from all over the world and are always open to people spending time here. Now it might seem that we're into entertaining, but the truth is, most of the time we're not. We create a home, on the other

hand, that is host to every person who walks through our door. What's important to us is to create a place where everyone is welcome, where each person can determine their own experience while they're here (including us), and we come together periodically for a little evening news.

We live in Open Space.

After using Open Space in our consulting work to support organizations in creating a more inviting style of leadership, we realized the principles operated at a truly foundational level. They would work everywhere in our lives. So in an effort to live a more inviting life, we brought it home. And it fit perfectly.

### A Foundation of Invitation.

We grew up in homes that, for very different reasons, were places that discouraged us from inviting people over. So we agreed it was integral to our relationship to create a foundation of invitation as we built our lives together. We couldn't possibly sustain our desire for invitation if we felt obligated to entertain everyone every moment. By integrating the foundations of Open Space and creating a few tools to convey how we live, we open the space, alleviate misunderstandings and make everyone more comfortable.

When you step inside our front door you see a curved wall of frames hung from the ceiling holding the core principles of how we hold space and live in invitation in our house, and our lives. We call these core principles Grace Immersion. Here is what is written in the four frames in the entry hall:



### *Live in Open Space.*

This is where we share the Four Principles and the Law of Open Space and the notion of Passion Bounded by Responsibility. You know how that story goes... it's a crucial part of holding space in our house.

### *The State of Grace Document.*

Open Space is built on Invitation, and the State of Grace Document is, in essence, the your Invitation to Know Me as well as my Invitation to Know You. It creates a space where each person involved in the relationship, be it short or long-term, can share why they are drawn to this particular relationship situation, how they show up, their preferences, and what they might need in a stressful moment that they might not be able to ask for. By having this knowledge and understanding up front, the relationship runs more smoothly. The State of Grace Document is a tool we created in 1998 to provide the minimal framework, like Open Space, from which to know ourselves and one another well enough to meet our highest goal: to be in a state of grace with each other the rest of our lives, rather than keeping the relationship status quo.

Once we created the first State of Grace Document for our intimate relationship, we found that the desire for a state of grace in our marriage was no different than the state of grace we preferred to have with our family, friends, clients, and every person who comes to our house.

The State of Grace Document is made up of 5 components, written by each of the people involved and then merged together into one Document: 1. The Story of Us; 2. Interaction Styles and Warning Signs; 3. Expectations; 4. Questions to Return to Peace if the Need Arises; 5. Long-term Timeframe Agreement.

The concept is now being used in both business and personal venues in many countries around the world. It is a 2+ page, personal and explicit document designed and written by those in the relationship — preferably at the beginning of the relationship, while things are still going smoothly. It is a radical new foundation that even replaces the legal contracts our society insists we use to legitimize our relationships. Have you bought a house/car, started a business, new job, gotten married without one lately?

The very act of creating a State of Grace Document can almost ensure you never have to use it. It dramatically alters the path of the day to day relationship. When we agree to trust one another at the start, learn up front what does and doesn't work for one another, create an atmosphere that allows for vulnerability, and pay attention to signs along the way, we tend to avoid difficulties and shorten transition periods. ([www.stateofgracedocument.com](http://www.stateofgracedocument.com))

***Our Welcome Home State of Grace Document.***

We have a State of Grace Document with all our guests that you'll see on the next page which we call the Welcome Home page. It not only acts as an invitation to all who come through our door, it is also a way to open the space— to share the way we live our lives. When people arrive we show them the Grace Immersion wall, including the 4 Principles of Open Space and the Law of Two Feet, hand them our Welcome Home page, tell them that they are home, and invite them to act exactly as they would in their own home. We then open up the marketplace of ideas by sharing our plans for the time we will be in this shared space and ask others to share their plans as well. Which might mean that we have guests for a week that we barely see.

We've found that by stating the guiding principals up front, as the fun begins, a crucial foundation is built for coexisting harmoniously in a shared space.

***The following page is a copy of our Welcome Home State of Grace Document:***



# Welcome Home!



1.
  - ~ Ask for anything you want. Always.
  - Don't censor yourself.
  - ~ Sometimes it may not be possible, but always ask, and we'll do the same.

2.
  - ~ This house is as much yours as ours.
  - ~ Be comfortable everywhere.
  - ~ If you see something that needs doing, go for it.
  - ~ If there's something that bugs you, feel free to take care of it.

3.
  - Do what you want.
  - Go where you want.
  - Be self sufficient.

4.
  - ~ We don't live on a preset schedule. (We're usually up till 4 or 5 AM)
  - ~ We eat when we're hungry. We sleep when we're tired.
  - ~ If you're hungry and want to eat, anything in the kitchen is yours... or chat with us about whether we want to eat together.
  - ~ Oftentimes we need to retreat to our room to recharge Maureen's energy or to get work done. We love working in our room upstairs because it's our favorite room in the house and Maureen doesn't have to go up and down the stairs as much.
  - ~ When we're not around, just do as you like or would do at your own home.
  - ~ If you need our car, feel free to take it. (Keys are on the front hall table.)

5.
  - ~ Because our office is at home, we often need to get work done, even though we might rather be lounging with you.
  - ~ If there's something you want to do, we've got maps, guidebooks, etc. to help you know where you want to go. (In basket by hall benth.)
  - ~ Even if we don't see you, we love it that you're here!

6.
  - ~ We tend to be lovers of "what is."
  - That means our greatest desire is to be happy with whatever reality is, at the moment, without needing people or circumstances to be different.
  - ~ You don't need to be anything or do anything to be welcome here.

7.
  - ~ Lastly, but most importantly... Our ultimate goal is to be in a state of grace with each other, with you, with everything, always.

That means, that if at any time you're frustrated or something's not feeling right, you absolutely must let us know.

Enjoy!  
with grace and love,  
Zelle, Maureen,  
Kate & Kerrigan



A few misc. thoughts . . . extra towels are in the hall closet . . . extra blankets are in the wicker chest in the upstairs hallway . . . toiletries and medicines are in the hall closet across from the towels . . . grocery store: turn left out of driveway, right at the first light, it will be on your right about a 1/2 mile. It's before the next stoplight. It's called Ingles . . . Maps, guidebooks, etc. are in a basket in the hall by the back door . . . phonebooks for Hendersonville and Asheville are in the cabinet above the tea kettle in the kitchen . . . the post office is out the driveway and right, down the road a bit on the right, it's just after the first light . . . there's a small, friendly used bookstore just across from the post office . . . there's a couple little places to eat in Flat Rock and some gift stores . . . Main St. Hendersonville is great to walk around, shop, see a movie or eat, turn left out the driveway and go straight until it really does look like Main St. USA . . . there are walking trails at the historic Carl Sandburg Home, turn right out the driveway and follow the signs, it's walking distance (15-20 minutes) . . . in the greater Asheville area there's the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Smokey Mountains, the Biltmore Estate, galleries, Chimney Rock, the Cherokee Indian Reservation, the Blue Ridge Parkway and over 100 waterfalls nearby! Have fun!



### ***Ask for Everything. Always Say Your Truth.***

We asked one another, very early in our relationship, if we could just ask for everything we wanted from one another without censoring ourselves. But on the flip side, it would only work if each of us would commit to saying our truth when the other asks. In many ways this became our verbal “Law of Two Feet” as well as a way to live in continual invitation. In essence, we wanted to be sure the other wasn’t “giving” out of obligation, because obligation is weighty and extraordinarily dull in our opinion. We only wanted the giving if we were truly interested in doing it, yet each of us didn’t want to be the one to determine the other’s genuineness. Now, after years of being together, we truly know that every time we do something for each other, we’re doing it because we want to. We can’t tell you how freeing and energizing this is! We realized that censoring ourselves all those years was exhausting. Now we ask for absolutely everything we want, and we’re actually thrilled when the other says no because it means they are being authentic!

### ***Admire the Bluebirds.***

***When something great appears as a possibility, people generally react in one of two ways:*** 1. Some decide not to get excited, and even dismiss the goodness around the corner, so they won’t feel disappointed if it never happens. They live in past disappointments. 2. Others put so much energy into that something great in the future, that they are devastated when that something doesn’t end up happening. Either way the present is not really involved.

Admiring the bluebirds, on the other hand, is about appreciating the beauty of a possibility... in the present moment.

When something great is expected, let’s say a big check from a client, we’ve decided to enjoy the happiness of the possibility. We are admiring the bluebird that’s flying around us, and isn’t it gorgeous! Think of all the things that we can do with that money. When the check is deposited in our bank, that is when the bluebird has actually landed, and we can celebrate the landing of the bluebird. But while the bluebird flies around, there isn’t fear of the future not turning out the way we would like, there is only enjoyment of the present moment and the possibilities that life has in store for us. If by chance the check never comes, we’ve enjoyed the time thinking about it and we’re not dependent on the check arriving for our happiness.

Admiring the Bluebirds is one way of honoring the 4 principles: whoever comes are the right people (we are all bluebirds to one another), whenever it starts is the right time, when it’s over it’s over (the bluebird lands only when it lands), and whatever happens is the only thing that could - and as a result living life in the present moment.

### ***Love What Is.***

This speaks to our preference to love whatever is happening, versus fighting with reality and wanting anything in the world, or in our house, to be different. Loving what is means loving everything that comes through that door, not just

the ideas or people that think like us. We use a process called The Work ([www.thework.com](http://www.thework.com) or [www.maureenandzelle.com/lovingwhatis.htm](http://www.maureenandzelle.com/lovingwhatis.htm)), created by Byron Katie, to simplify this shift in perspective when we're not loving what is. It involves 4 Questions and a Turnaround, and much like Open Space, provides the minimum framework for monumental transformation. It asks us to question our stressful thoughts to see if what we think might be truth with a capital T, is actually not true at all. So you start with a stressful thought, like, "John shouldn't treat people like that."

The Questions are:

1. Is it true?
2. Can you absolutely know that it's true? (What's reality?)
3. How do you react when you think that thought? (Tense, tight, angry?)
4. Who would you be without the thought? (At peace, calm, willing to listen to him?)

After you've investigated your statement with the four questions, you're ready to turn it around (the concept you are questioning). Each turnaround is an opportunity to experience the opposite of your original statement and see what you and the person you've judged have in common.

Doing The Work is like having a Monopoly game Get Out of Jail Free Card in your back pocket at all times.

We've been brought up to believe that pain and suffering are to be expected. That when certain things happen in our lives—death, the end of a marriage, experiencing health issues, a bad childhood, physical pain, exhausting guests—we are expected to feel a certain way. It can feel like a jail sentence with little to no chance for parole.

But it's just not true. Suffering, we've found, is optional.

We end our stress when I question the kinds of thoughts that cause us pain, the ones that sound like: "He should love me." "She should respect my beliefs." "He isn't pulling his weight." "This pain is taking over my life." "It's because of them that I feel so awful." These thoughts hurt because they haven't yet been understood.

So if we're frustrated or hurt by you, our first response is to go inside and question what we're thinking about you using The Work, a.k.a. my Get Out of Jail Free Card.

For thousands of years we've been told not to judge, but we still do it all the time—how our friends should act, whom our children should care about, what our parents should feel, do, or say. In The Work, rather than suppress these judgments, we use them as starting points for self-realization. By letting the judging mind have its life on paper, we discover through the mirror of those around us what we haven't yet realized about ourselves.

It's the most powerful way we've found to truly live every day in Invitation.

Being inviting is always rewarding, but not always easy.

The very notion of being inclusive says you don't exclude, which means you invite the "difficult" in with the good. We found that if we put parameters around who we invite, whether it's because they think like us or are easier to

get along with, we could no longer call ourselves inviting. We've had people stay who really triggered us, but in the end we welcome them back anytime, because it's important to us that our minds be stretched and our hearts opened. And who's to say we weren't the ones creating the circumstances?

Recently we met a couple who was considering moving to Asheville. They were staying at a hotel while exploring the area, but we told them it was crazy when they could stay more comfortably at our house. Mark and Susan stayed for a week and it was like having our two best friends around to make dinner, laugh, and stay up all night chatting with. If we'd been apprehensive, because we knew so little about them, we would have missed out on an exceptional encounter. So far it's been worth the rough spots to live what we believe.

For us, invitation seems to be at the heart of our diversity issues. As soon as we create "the other," we forget we're actually one. Starting with our home is usually a breeze and sometimes a bit of work, but it's helped us branch out and be more inviting in everything we do.

## What It Means to Me

Ralph Copleman

*With a shiver I snake  
around this commission,  
all sudden sighs and butterflies,  
rings of cold bronze.  
Still I clear my throat, and to it...*

This is running down a specter,  
stealthy stranger in familiar garb  
taking seats in the mind's eye,  
a changeling unveiling vision,  
smiling at my glowing blind spot.

It took me in stages.

First I ran after it drooling, to corner it  
in my ambitious mind, trap it, leash it  
for my pet, a plaything for crowing, strutting.  
I pushed it around my neighborhood,  
showing it off, basking in its reflection,  
as if it were mine, as if it were I.

Soon it slipped away, ran dizzying whorls  
and clamoring, pierced things.  
I scraped along walls, bloodied,  
Later I bathed in it, fervently  
suffusing its warm soapy gifts:  
love, journey, depthless plunges,  
angels, oceans, mountaintops,  
grief, chimaerae.

I mark steps differently now,  
they echo now.  
I am a breathing collaborative,  
I circle to learn. I *hear* peace,  
feel its bones, its very NOW.

Past and future then, embedded  
in pleats and folds, voices cracking,  
bright shuffles in the sublime  
for this, too, is the shady side and

I do not know the place.

And some worlds covet the conversation  
though most plunge headlong from that  
and birth some fresh *next*.

At last I face this: possibility, pure,  
numinous, crackling, breathless.  
Nothing. Else.

You ask the immeasurable, damn you.  
I fear this has neither end nor beginning,  
like the madness of art.  
Go neither looking  
nor shying nor naming,  
but go.

## ***Being the Open Space of Peace***

Arun Wakhlu

Our view of life powerfully affects our way of life. It also deeply affects the way we live and work. Who we are being affects what we are seeing. What we are seeing affects who we are being.

This bodymind called "Arun Wakhlu" is not who I am. This bodymind consists of water and food, some memories and dreams. It is made up of atoms..... protons, electrons and neutrons. These owe their existence to mysterious entities called Quarks, held together by Gluons. All these dance together in a vast sea of open space... gorgeously peaceful , free and empty open space.

So who is writing all this? Through the medium of all these particles (which are really quanta of vibrating energy), it is Spirit which dances forth expressing itself spontaneously. These words arise from the open space of awareness.

This mysterious essence is who I am. It is the most open space there is. People have called it by different names: Spirit, Allah, Brahman, the Mystery, Tao, Being, Sat-Chit-Ananda, Buddha Nature, Suchness, the Peace that Passeth Understanding, Awareness and many others. This I am is one. It is none other than your own essence, now. For there is only one centre, only one silence, only one Peace.

What happens when one is this Peace? When the phrase 'The Open Space of Peace' is anagrammed, it reveals 'Potence of Heap Escape.' All the heaps are left behind. Heaps of thoughts, ideas, notions, bodies, sorrows, joys, desires... all are escaped from .... And also mysteriously deeply accepted. A wholehearted acceptance arises. A deep and appreciative "yes!" to all that is in the now, as somehow being perfection in progress. "Whoever comes is the right people; whatever happens..."

There is a peaceful understanding that all is well. Life can't be wrong. Only my understanding of the ways of the whole ("Everything will nurture me. All is medicine") is occasionally overshadowed.

This understanding unfolds gratitude... a heartfelt "Thank You" to life for its amazing perfection. Humility arises as the heart melts. Oneness leads to responsibility. The "Law of Two Feet" ...heartfelt passion dancing with responsibility, and the "The Law of Two hands" : "If it is to be, it is up to me"

As one witnesses this unfolding drama, from this empty (and incredibly full!) space of Awareness and Peace, all seems like a playful dance ... A “Leela” of evolution, a creative play of learning ..... the emergence and dissolving of forms and actions.

In the Open Space of Peace, emergence is allowed. As we merge into the oneness of this moment, all is peaceful and perfect. Whatever will expand this peace will emerge.

As I am silence, and witness the emergence of what needs to emerge, this bodymind marvels at how love does its work. This bodymind is amazed at how wondrously and effortlessly, loving action happens.

What practice will help me to be this open space of Peace, moment to moment? How will I know that I am flowing in peaceful oneness with the whole? Here is a modified version of a device inspired by an ancient Indian text .The original source is not known. (I am grateful to the source.)

### **PEACE All Places and All Times**

If you are truly interested in knowing, beyond even the slightest doubt, a peace that has no conditions or limits, if you are truly interested in knowing a freedom that has absolutely no boundaries at all, if you are truly interested in coming to the end of all seeking, then please consider, very slowly and carefully, the following: (Take as long as you like.)

Peace is everywhere and always.

It is always here. It is always now.

All places arise in Peace.

All times arise in Peace.

All feelings arise in Peace.

All thoughts arise in Peace.

All sights, sounds, smells, and tastes arise in Peace.

All joys and sorrows arise in Peace.

All births, and deaths, arise in Peace.

Your body arises in Peace.

Your mind arises in Peace.

Your emotions arise in Peace.

Your entire life arises in Peace.

Your entire past arises in Peace.

Your entire present arises in Peace.

Your entire future arises in Peace.

Everything about yourself arises in Peace.

Everything about everyone else arises in Peace.

The entire history, current, and future state of the world arises in Peace.

Everything in the world and about the world arises in Peace.

Everything in the universe and about the universe arises in Peace.

God, and everything about God, arises in Peace.

All love, affection, kindness, sympathetic joy, forgiveness, healing, and compassion arise in, and are perfect expressions of, Peace.

All insight, understanding, and wisdom arise in, and are perfect manifestations of, Peace.

All sincerity, truth, and honesty arise in, and are perfect reflections of, Peace.

All pleasures and pains arise in Peace.

All desire, fear, anger, sorrow, loneliness, doubt, and confusion also arise in Peace.

All of what you want, and all of what you don't want, arise in Peace.

All of what you think of as "yourself" arises in Peace.

All of what you think of as "everybody and everything else" arises in Peace.

All of these things arise, and disappear, in Peace.

Before, during, and after all thoughts,

before, during, and after all feelings,

before, during, and after all sensations,

before, during, and after all perceptions,

before, during, and after all mental formations,

before, during, and after all experiences,

what always remains?

What is never born, and never dies?

All theories, philosophies, and teachings about consciousness arise, and disappear, in Peace.

All religions and spiritual paths arise, and disappear, in Peace.

Even the word, I, and the word, Peace, arise and disappear in it.

After all things -- all bodies, minds, thoughts, emotions, sensations, feelings, and experiences arise, and fall away, what is eternally here and always present?

This is what you are.

It is neither grandiose nor humble. It is simply the truth.

Understand this deeply, and the battle is over.

Understand this without reservation, and there is no more struggle.

Realize this fully, and the search has come to an end.

May the joy of being Peace fill all our thoughts, words and actions with Love and Light.

**Love from your own Self.**

## Inventing ways \*

Alan Stewart, PhD

Three seminal happenings occurred in my life in 1994.

. Harrison's "Open Space Technology A User's Guide" landed 'out of the blue' on my desk. This turned out to be a most wondrous gift, perhaps primarily as it introduced me to a set of guidelines for everyday living.

. Two colleagues and I co-hosted a visit to Australia in August of that year by Humberto Maturana and also co-edited and contributed to a collection of essays entitled "Seized by Agreement, Swamped by Understanding" to celebrate this.

. I elected to take an early retirement from academe to embark on a new career.

Looking back I can see that intertwining of these has had a substantial bearing on my subsequent journeying, literally and metaphorically, and how I engage in day to day life.

The arrival of the book on OST came just a few days before a gathering which I had organized and for which a speaker - the usual procedure - had not materialized. I read it as fast as I could, decided to 'have a go' *in lieu* of a more formal input, and was totally astonished at how those present responded to the invitation to be in open space - to come together openly, naturally and honestly to search for understanding. I was 'hooked' and have been on the line ever since!

Preparing for Humberto's visit and becoming more aware of the essence of his teaching has led me to recognise connections between the Latin roots of conversation '*con versare* - *to turn or dance together*' and what actually happens in an Open Space gathering. Through conversing in such a situation we re-invent each other and the world around us. And when this happens, wisdom - the intuitive knowing of how to act appropriately in the circumstances - just emerges.

This growing realization triggered me to switch from professional speaking - my initial choice of a career post university life - to becoming a professional conversationalist. By this I mean a person whose *forte* is to hold space in which people participate in contexts of 'We are in this together and to treat each other well' about things that matter to them.

I would say that personal relationships which have arisen through my acting on these fundamental premises have influenced very greatly my way of being. And that my knowing of what makes for wholesome relating has helped to promote my being a facilitator/practitioner of OST and associated conversational processes. Just one flow on is meeting with remarkable people in wondrous spaces, such as at WOSonOS gatherings in Monterey in California in 1998 and near Melbourne in Australia in 2002. Plus with myriad others online.

What is becoming increasing salient is my growing awareness of interconnections between OST and its multifaceted underpinnings and significances, as I perceive them.

One expression of this is conceiving of OST as a form of magic, or as the OST practitioner being a magician. Here I refer to how articulation of the principles and the law sets up in the minds of participants an acceptance of ways of being together which they could not have imagined - until they were in a context in which a novel 'reality' was being created, with their compliance, and into which they felt thoroughly embraced without any effort of will. When this occurs the only thing that could happen is that something magical appears.

This may be thought of as analogous to the invoking of lightness and humour, which, in the hands of a skilled comedian, can mean "At the height of laughter, the universe is flung into a kaleidoscope of new possibilities."

*Jean*

*Houston*

I see the real 'gift' of being such a practitioner is having the privilege of being party to the 'inevitable' emergence of constructive, creative outcomes while having no idea of what these will be. Going into an enterprise with no expectations and delicious anticipations!

I do this in a wide range of contexts as a 'process' person who is inspired to pass on inspiration through engaging in conversing - and in initiating and responding to invitations to do this. Just some of the learnings which have informed the personal dimension of my participation in the world which I pass on in diverse ways:

"What we choose to notice creates the worlds we live in."

*Humberto Maturana*

"What we see, That we are". *Ken Wilber. Author of Integral Spirituality.*

"If you wish to learn how to see learn how to act."

"Any moment we are free to act towards a future we desire."

"Life is what we invent, not discover."

These come from the late [Heinz von Foerster](#) who was one of Humberto's friends and colleagues. I had the great fortune to meet Heinz in 1981 and to visit him in 2001 at his home on [Rattlesnake Hill](#), Pescadero, California not long before he died.

“Our behaviors change only if we decide to belong together differently.”  
*Meg Wheatley, author of ‘A Simpler Way’ and ‘Turning to One Another’*

“The past too is an invention of the present and keeps changing as we look at it.”  
*Lucas Pawlik*

“The person with the most available choices will have more ability to operate successfully”. *A principle of NLP (Neuro-linguistic Programming)*

An instance of my early work in this field which had the germ of such underpinnings is the now well known [Marion Story](#). This has influenced many people through demonstrating a direct connection between purpose and process and outcome in a community consultation.

A recent posting makes such ideas more explicit. This is with and through the wisdom of my friend and co-author Arun Wakhlu. Entitled [“One Dance ... Uncovering human magnificence through conversation”](#) Arun and I hope this novel approach will be helpful to other OST practitioners in expanding their vision and understanding of their role in enabling the human spirit to come out to play.

For aren't we all engaged in this peace promoting enterprise?

## **Life as an Invitation: Living in Family in Open Space**

Caitlin Frost (as lived with Chris Corrigan, Aine Corrigan-Frost and Finn Corrigan-Frost.)

"Who wants to make a newspaper with me?" 7 year old Finn walks into the middle of the living room in our holiday condo with a pile of paper and a handful of pens. Chris (dad) looks up from his novel and offers to advise in any way needed, if needed. Aine (age 10) rushes over with a box of colored pencils, some scissors and a lively discussion ensues about whether to create one newspaper together or one each and just help each other.

More discussion about whether to sell the papers, what a fair cost would be and how to get them copied. It is decided to do one for now and share the profits - "Will you buy one? Will you subscribe?" Caitlin (mom) comes in with a cup of tea and her novel. Willing to buy one later, will wait to hear the price when it is done. Caitlin joins the circle on the rug instead of going straight to her reading and a three way conversation ensues about pricing and marketing; responsibility involved in a regular publication vs a one timer. Everyone has thoughts on this. Chris throws in a few comments from the sidelines - his experience as a newspaper columnist years ago is of keen interest.

Kids then shift back to passionate production, mom heads for the couch with her book. Finn runs to the bedroom and fetches a pack of cards - lays them out in front of himself so he can copy the numbers - sometimes they end up facing the wrong way and he wants this newspaper to look professional. Caitlin, seeing him scanning the room with a glint in his eye and remembering last night as he fell asleep and said "mom, I have decided it is time for me to learn to write clearly", quickly writes out the alphabet in upper and lower case and slides it over to him. He smiles and gets down to work. Hours pass. The newspaper is done - faces shining. It is beautiful, and parents agree to the \$1.00 charged.

Finn would like to make another one, but Aine is done for now and exercises the Law of Two Feet out the door and onto the grass. "No thanks Finn, that was fun but now I want to play." After a bit, Aine returns with our travel guidebook. "Who would like to drive to Hana? Can we do it today - it sounds so beautiful?" Some family discussion again. The book says if you want to go you should leave by 7:30 am to beat the crowds but we have enough family sense of 'When it starts is the right time' and with an agreed energy of not attaching to outcome we decide we all want to go. Finn's first choice right now is to make his own newspaper - still very passionate about the last 'offering' - so he packs up the pens, paper and his help sheet as heads out to the car. We load the car and off we go - Finn earnestly writing in the back seat, occasionally asking for spelling support offered by his sister or his mom for the tough ones - the rest of us reading up and talking about the road to Hana.

Along the way we each offer ideas for stops. Finn includes some thoughts on our travels in his newspaper. We all find out lots about tropical plants, the history of Taro, and swim in a beautiful waterfall. 5 hours later we arrive in Hana, it is a tiny town, very beautiful but clearly the journey there is the destination. It doesn't occur to any of us that it should be otherwise as we enjoy veggie burgers on the black sand beach and discuss the beautiful drive.

### **Living in Open Space with our Family.**

The energy and principles of Open Space are a deep part of our lives as a family. For Chris and I it has worked so well to ground our life, relationship, learning and work that it made such good sense to continue living this way when we had children and trust where it would take us. It has taken us on a long journey, and really just back home again. In some ways it is explicit in our life with our kids (OK we do have the principles posted around the house!) and in other ways it feels to us like such a natural way to live.

### **Whoever Shows Up is the Right People.**

Whoever shows up is the right people seems like it would be a pretty obvious principle when you have children. Whichever baby/person shows up is your child. Together we are our family. Flowing with that is much more loving and generative than fighting against it. One is really into music and the other one builds stuff. One loves chocolate, another can't stand it. One talks a lot when excited or upset, another gets quiet. We all love a good movie, a good laugh and a walk in the forest.

Knowing that they/we are the right people and nourishing their/our lives from that place (rather than trying to create kids in a particular form) leads to one of my favorite energies of Open Space: Curiosity. Ahhh - it is such a spacious place, with so much potential. It is the place we try to live from with our kids, and the energy we try to support in them. It is the way out of many confusing and frustrating places in family life (life in general of course) and is the way into many amazing experiences and learning opportunities together. It is also a value that they can take into the world as they connect with others that opens up so many more opportunities for them to be curious about the people that show up in their life and experiences they have rather than trying to change them.

### **Whenever It Starts is the Right Time:**

One core part of our life in learning with our kids, is that we have a very rich life of learning that takes place outside of the formal education system. They don't go to school. Chris and I learn very well in our life experience and with the flexibility and skills to follow a passion when it arises and learn that way, and we have noticed that works well for our kids also.

Finn decided to learn to write in the middle of our Christmas vacation. Passion and responsibility showed up immediately and he mastered it for himself (with a bit of support) in two days. Part of that time in a moving car on a windy road. Aine waited a number of years past the school age for reading and then read 4 books in a week. She knows all the plants in the forest behind our house because one season that fascinated her. She has a larger vocabulary than I do. Finn draws amazing maps for his imaginary kingdoms and strategy games and can take any of us at dice games. It is beautiful to watch their focus and determination when they are alight with passion about whatever they are learning. And their ability to ask for what they need to proceed.

### **Whenever it is Over, it is Over.**

The newspaper project ended for Finn (for now anyway) with his masterpiece that was completed as we pulled into Hana. He did it himself and he learned to write to his own satisfaction and headed off to the beach to build a sand fortress. He uses his new writing skill with confidence as he needs it in his life now. We don't make a big deal about it, though it is lovely to watch and Chris and I exchange smiles - happy we didn't force him to write when he was 5. Happy we didn't force readers on Aine when she was 6.

Aine makes earrings intensely for a few weeks, moves to necklaces and then to sewing. It could look erratic from the outside but I can see the flow. She feels comfortable to move on in her interests and learning and I can see how what she learns in one activity feeds the next. All along through these changes she continues to enjoy her theater class, her singing is dear to her in an ongoing way, and audio books are consumed like oxygen. Curiosity is a constant.

### **Whatever Happens is the Only Thing that Could have Happened.**

This is our family version of faith. It is our grounding energy for trusting life and for stepping into the unknown; for avoiding shame and for engaging with 'failure' with the positive energy that allows it to take its rightful place in learning. It is a central point for many of our more poignant conversations with the kids, which are a central core of our living in Open Space together. This ability to let go and trust life is an important part of the courage needed to live this way and is crucial for forward movement.

### **Passion and Responsibility:**

These 'engines powering Open Space" are very much the engines that we value and work to nurture in our children. Together with supporting skills and principles we believe that well developed and understood, passion and responsibility pretty much set our children up for a rich and healthy life of learning and contributing. The passion shining in the eyes of little children is unmistakable, and it took hold of our hearts tightly when we experienced this

in our own children. Their fire and curiosity and determination to know the world and be part of it is magical.

We also believe the drive to take responsibility is inherently present - though at times it can be harder to see in children - when they don't want to clean up their toys or set the table. We see the drive to be responsible more clearly in the proud look on their face when they get their own shoes on for the first time; are asked to help with an adult task that holds meaning for them, or their babysitting services are requested by an adult family friend that they admire. Supporting and nurturing the experience of responsibility where it shows up attached to their own passions allows the experience of responsibility to grow and over time it is able to shift more naturally to situations where the connection to their own passions and goals is more abstract (like setting the table or doing laundry.)

### **The Law of Two Feet.**

This is Aine's favorite Open Space law, and is thus posted more than once around the house. The kids have expanded it slightly to include joy. On our wall it states: *"If you are not learning or contributing or enjoying yourself, use your two feet and find somewhere you can."* Again with conversation and contemplation as huge parts of our family practice, the kids are very aware of their own learning, what it feels like to contribute (make a difference, be heard, listen deeply) and whether something has heart and meaning for them. They get it that this doesn't always feel like a shallow version of 'fun', and they value and recognize the feeling of learning in themselves, as well as the good feeling of contribution. So it is a very natural impulse for them to stay where it is flowing and to feel like moving on when it isn't. We find this to be a very powerful set of inner impulses to stay tuned to in life, despite the fact that in many formal schooling environments this principle is generally not always celebrated.

Their deep sense of this principle helps them make very healthy and mature decisions about their own lives and learning and gives us a great foundation for the discussions that are part of that process. Just recently the principles were directly cited by Aine as she decided to move from a class where it 'felt like they were just pushing the learning into my head and never wanting to hear from us' to a place she could still engage with the subject she was so interested in, but with a teaching style more suited to her needs.

### **Butterflies and Bumblebees:**

I love watching the butterfly and bumblebee action in our family - in the kids and in ourselves. I think our sense of joy in it is greatly helped by how clear we are as parents - from our own life experience and our many years of facilitating Open Space - that both can be a valuable way to learn and contribute.

Through a more traditional lens of looking at children's learning, the Bumblebee action of our children could sometimes look like a lack of attention or ability to follow through. Halfway through building a lego ship, off to read a book, outside to run around for ten minutes and then back to the lego ship. Joining a conversation with Aine and dad about the cloud formations then heading off to jump on the trampoline while the conversation inside continues. From Finn's perspective he got what he needed to know about cloud formations without overloading himself, went to jump and think about it and then weaves it into a conversation about something else over dinner. He generally does this in a respectful way, and as we are not attached to his staying for the whole conversation it flows easily and he is able to learn a lot.

Our kids also learn a ton as Butterflies - a conversation or two with them often highlights how this plays out in their learning as they know such much they have not been "taught". Being a kid in a lively and interesting household (we work from home and host friends and colleagues from around the world in our little island house)- busy building a block castle or drawing in the corner is a great vantage point for quietly observing and listening to the adult life. As life flows parents and visitors are at times drawn into their space to play and chat and it feeds the system. Perhaps our children's comfort with expressing themselves and connecting with people of all ages makes them even more able to enrich their lives when they are being butterflies.

### **Chaos and Conflict:**

It can all sound very idyllic and perfect, and of course it is Life and we are all busy learning and being human in our kid and adult forms - so there is also bound to be some juicy chaos and some lively conflict. And what kind of learning for life would it be without it? As parents, and as a family, we have a fairly high tolerance for chaos - probably helped by our trust in it as a valuable part of life and learning. Sometimes the house looks like an art studio or a science lab. Sometimes the whole living room is covered in dominoes. Sometimes it is quiet, often it is not. It is fun to hear the kids themselves point it out when we are experiencing the 'groan zone'; with a sigh, not exactly enjoying it, but with a sense of knowing its role and that it will pass on to good things.

Our lives are in no way a 'free for all'. As in other forms of Open Space - structure and control are present, they're just not made up ahead of time and out of context as a curriculum or set of rules. They are generated organically as needed and as often by the kids as by us. Bedtime was pretty late for awhile when there was a passion for building Rube Goldberg Machines that required dad being home from meetings in town. Also when the new set of Tamora Pierce books arrived. An offer of an early morning job that appealed to Aine drew the bedtime back. Long summer nights stretched it again. A need for some adult quiet time moved some of the late night activity into kids rooms. Mornings generally draw us all in to our quieter work of writing, reading,

building stuff; afternoons draw us out into the world. Our core practice of conversation and listening helps identify needs and create appropriate structure as the need arises.

Self organization abounds in the chaos of our family life. We could never plan the life we live with our kids and all that happens - and yet it does. There are four of us, a budgie and two adopted chickens. Everyone gets fed, gets fresh air and exercise. We all pursue shared and individual interests, learn and grow. Two of us run the family business, we all study, explore, volunteer in our community and take part in lovely friendships (the budgie and chickens in their own way). We travel in various combinations, make music and art, balance rocks, write blogs, ask questions and find answers (most of the time.) It is a mystery and a miracle how it works - like many an Open Space meeting, and yet it does. Beautifully.

When we experience conflict - allowing the Law of Two Feet, gives everyone space to breathe. We don't force a 'sorry' on the kids, and often find that an hour or two later, a beautiful expression of love and remorse follows, often with quite mature self reflection, and an openness to conversation. Heat rises, and there is space for it to dissipate. Conversation at the 'right time' supports learning all round, and the process and respect for each person is trusted as we find ways to meet individual and collective needs and get to know our emotions.

Working with questions rather than pushing for answers also helps to hold the space open, and our ongoing practice of engaging with questions this way - both the questions we ask each other and the questions we ask ourselves - seems to shift the energies of judgment, blame and shame into a space of curiosity. "It's all your fault!" has space to ease into "I wonder why he did that?.... I wonder what I added to the fire?" Curiosity holds the conditions for listening and contemplation. Not every sibling or family issue is completely solved in the moment, but this approach seems to bring back to the center the love we all have for each other and the problems seem smaller in that light, with the circle of our family connections strengthened and held.

#### **Life as our Bulletin Board; The World as our Marketplace:**

We have many ways of 'posting' and 'inviting' each other in our family and in our community. This can look like Finn's call for a newspaper team or it can look like Chris or I leaving interesting books, resources and materials around the house to see who 'shows up' and what unfolds from there. Chris e-mails the kids interesting websites which sometimes they just enjoy, but often lead to group focus - "hey dad - thanks for the cool site on the universe - do you want to come look with me?"

The concept of 'inviting' in life and in learning is something we talk about and practice. What are we inviting and why? How can we do so in a clear and 'inviting way' and who do we want to invite and why? Lots to talk about.

We 'post' and respond to 'postings' in our community. We do this by seeing what is on offer at the local community center, in the community paper, relevant websites and such, and going where our passion takes us. We just posted a community ceili as the kids want to experience organizing a fund raiser; we all love music and dancing and the theater program they are part of needs to fund it's building. We'll see who comes. We also just posted an informal sushi making afternoon on our e-mail list of local home learning families and will see who shows up at lunchtime.

We also engage with the marketplace by asking for what we need - Aine loves crafts and has little luck posting that in our family as the rest of us draw a total blank on that front. So we post it wider in the community - "who will mentor Aine in crafts? And would any other kids like to join." We found an amazing craft mentor and a few other eager little girls, and the Saturday craft club was born.

We want our kids to grow up experiencing the world as the lively and inviting marketplace that it is. To see the invitations that are everywhere, and to have the clarity and passion to respond as well as the confidence and ability to 'post' their own invitations wherever they go.

### **Showing up Whole.**

We have yet to find another model that describes and supports what we want for ourselves and our children in life the way Open Space does. We don't believe in learning or living as a closed system (or that it is even really possible) and the more we embrace that, the better it gets. With curiosity, passion, responsibility, and love as central life and Open Space practices, we are ready to engage with "whatever happens." . And of course in this busy 21st century world, we are happy to offer our kids (and ourselves) good doses of unscheduled space - sacred, open space - to continue the journey of finding out what we care about and contemplating who we are. As Harrison Owen deftly states "the special gift of Open Space (is that) it provides a safe space in which we may learn to live fully in the expanded now." What more could we ask of our life together as a family than the invitation and opportunity to live life Now, and show up whole?

*With thanks and a deep bow to my love and life partner Chris Corrigan who lives and learns and shares in this amazing life with me and holds beautiful family space with me. And to our wonderful children Aine and Finn who continue to open my mind and my heart to the unending possibilities of life.*

*Caitlin Frost and Chris Corrigan live with their children Aine and Finn on Bowen Island British Columbia. Together they have been happily living and working in Open Space for more than 10 years.*

## Living in Open Space

Michael Herman

I first heard about Open Space in 1994 or 1995. My facilitator friends were experimenting with it as a tool for organizing meetings. Mostly we practiced on ourselves, trying to figure out how it was *supposed* to work. Mostly, I think, we were working too hard, trying to get it right! In 1996, I fell headlong into the Open Space community, met Harrison Owen, attended training, a couple of conferences, and was invited to join an online learning forum. Some clients showed up and I "did" it for real.

Over the next ten years, I facilitated and documented and taught rather extensively on the subject, what I call the "practice" of open space. But more and more, in the last few years now, Open Space is disappearing. I think less and less about it, talk less, write less. This question about living open space is almost unanswerable. And yet, when I look across what I'm doing, in my life and my work, the Open Space imprint(?) is clear. It just doesn't matter so much anymore. It's no longer part of my thinking. It's not what I do. It's just sort of how I am.

Early on, one Saturday afternoon, I think, I found myself feeling a bit down. I recognized my state as some mix of confusion, longing, anxiety, sadness and restlessness. Maybe a bit hungry. Anyway, some familiar flavor of confusion, too many desires and not enough resources, bumping up against my own personal limits, again. But this time I recognized this state as familiar. It's how I often felt on the afternoon of Day 2, in Open Space. Like a little kid, burned out, over-stimulated, and still wanting more. So I did what I had learned to do in Open Space: I reviewed all the obvious options, things I thought I *could do*, or worse, *should do*, and then I went and took a nap -- which is exactly the thing I really *wanted* to do.

Another day, somewhere about that same time, I found myself fretting about the future of my business. I sat down at my desk and began making a list of "what's working" -- right NOW. It didn't take long to remember that I had resources, skills, relationships and successes. Soon enough, I was wondering what could be done to grow more of the same. For some time after that, whenever I noticed this anxiety return, mostly about the future, I would sit down and make a new list of "what's working now." Eventually the list-making fell away. "What's working" has become my everyday view, the base from which I habitually work, in my life and with my clients.

Now I do routinely keep a set of lists, which looks very much like the "to do" list many people keep. But for me, it's more of a "could do" list. I hold it as a personal version of the wall in Open Space. I can't possibly do everything that's

on it, so I pick one thing, work at it until I'm tired or bored or done, then use the Law of Two Feet and move on to the next thing. As much as I can, I let Whenever it Starts and When it's Over be true of my daily work. Sometimes things even fall off the list without action. And that's okay. When I find things to do that are bigger than I am, I make invitations. And I pay attention to invitations that come from others. I don't always show up to everything I'm invited, but I always put these things on my list, on my wall, in my marketplace of possibilities. And when I do show up, it's because whatever the event, it's the thing I most want to do just then.

I never really know what's going to happen, what can get done, who will turn up, or what I can do to help with anything, in any given moment or day. I never have known these things, of course, but mostly I think I went around thinking that I did, acting like I did, planning and designing like I did. Sometimes, sure enough, I was right. And sometimes I've been very wrong. Sometimes I'm still wrong, of course. This is my practice, not my perfection, after all. And when I do forget, when I fall back into thinking I know what is really happening, it's almost always more work -- mostly on the inside, but soon enough on the outside, too -- than I know it really needs to be.

Open Space gives me the context and experience for letting things be easier. Now, it's how I live and work, *when life really works.*

## Living in Peace with my office equipment - a love letter

Jo Toepfer

While working with Open Space Technology over the last decade I have come to understand quite well that its Philosophy and Principles are more than just a meeting methodology. It has clearly influenced my everyday life at home, in my family and in my organization. The law of two feet helps me not only to get out of my bed every morning but has proved to be a very useful navigator through chaos, confusion and conflict my life.

The law has also taken me on a journey towards a new and better understanding of the computer systems I am working with nearly every day. It seems to be clear to everybody that technical progress has a fairly deep impact on our life. Internet, Voice over IP and other new features have spread with high speed and influenced our thinking and behaviour profoundly. But not always have all these technical innovations made our life easier. To make all the technology work for you, one has to be up to date with knowledge and abilities too.

While muddling through the jungle of technical possibilities to find something that works for me I came across a new and different operating system for my computer called Ubuntu. It is not just another system of the Linux family. It is different in terms of its emergence, underlying principles and technical characteristics. It reminds me very much of a huge Open Space project.

First, the name “Ubuntu” is a word of the Southern African language family “Nguni”. A direct translation does not exist. But there is this wonderful video sequence in which the former president of South Africa Nelson Mandela explains the meaning of Ubuntu. He says: “In the old days, when we were young, travelers used to stop at our village. And he didn't have to ask for food or water. Once he stopped people gave him food and entertained him. This is one aspect of Ubuntu, but it illustrates various elements of this concept: Respect, Helpfulness, Sharing, Community, Caring, Collaboration, Trust and Unselfishness. To what extent do people enable the building of community around them? These are the important things in life. And if one can do so, we can get something very important done.”

These words are perfectly reflected in the software world inside the Ubuntu community. It is a huge network of thousands users around the globe. Whenever I encounter a problem that I am not able to solve, somebody out there has the solution. And most of the time I get advice or instruction how to fix a bug within minutes. The bulletin board in the internet are forums in various languages with well organized information about the system. It is easy to find an existing answer but even more advanced is the reliability of the

community. One will get the answer he is looking for within minutes after posting the question.

The folks who develop the system are self organized much like in an Open Space Technology meeting. Hundreds of applications already exist for almost every field of computer technology: graphical drawing, sound modulation, text editing, e-mail, Internet, etc. The number of available applications is growing every day and everybody can participate. The easiest way is to translate software application into your local language. Nearly every application offers a button that says “translate this application”. Pressing the button takes you to a website where you can link with the developer’s community to get involved. Like when we are signing up to a session that somebody has convened.

Another manifestation of the community are the local Ubuntu network meetings. Apart from large conferences held in Europe and the U.S. to take Ubuntu further, smaller network meetings take place in many major cities all over the world. If one wishes to get into face-to-face contact with other users and developers it is easy to sign up to these meetings. Very similar to the Open Space Stammtisch movement that meets in various places every first Monday of uneven months at 7pm.

As a result, we have a software product that works. It is free, is very stable, is easy to use, up to date, international and well documented. Comparing these properties with other more centralized operating systems, it has many advantages and it might be a question of time before this system unfolds its pure potential. I love it!

## **The Next Generation**

Michael Pannwitz

After 31 years of OD consulting all over the planet I ran into Open Space Technology in 1996. Have been hooked since then, facilitated 150 events, worked in 20 Trainings...and unlearned happily most of my OD consultation style. My major focus is to spread OST and to recruit new folks into Open Space work such as my sons.

## Accepting what is

Catherine Pfaehler-Senn

My two daughters Andrea (17) and Sarah (15) as well as their father and his new beloved have died on October 13, 2007 in Nam Thaloo cave in Thailand , which got suddenly flooded due to heavy monsoon rains, exactly during that one hour when they were visiting the cave. Had it not been for the Open Space principles, I would have despaired and gotten lost in resistance, fury etc. All the more since I have been consciously and daily dedicating my life to the divine for the past few years, this accident couldn't be anything else but: "Whatever happens. Whoever is there. When it starts. When it's over." Living with those principles since 1989, they have already carried me through my divorce from their father in 1995/96, and now through their leaving. It seems to me that somebody softly, yet definitely and decidedly closed the door of parenting in my life. There must be something else waiting for me, and it will show itself.

We got the news when on holidays in Spain, in Granada, on Sunday evening, October 14. On Monday, we were scheduled to arrive at Florian Fischer's home in Rodalquilar, Andalucia, only 2 hours from Granada. We couldn't have come to a better place. He and his family were wonderful, warm-hearted and most compassionate hosts for us. Florian was my mentor for the first big Open Space I was responsible for as a facilitator in April 2006, on the health of gay men, which in October 2006 led to an Open Space for people living with Aids. He coached me through all the preparations with the Swiss preparation group from Rodalquilar or Berlin via telephone or email. Only two days before the April event, he had to tell me he couldn't come to co-facilitate with me (I was meant to do the French part, he the German part) because of serious health issues. There again: Whatever happens... "The universe seems to think I can do it without Florian, so here we go." I learned a lot, especially regarding my energy reserves when an OS lasts for an entire week-end and I have to translate a lot more than expected.

Of course I am very sad at times, going through grief, learning to adjust to a new phase in my life. The part of me who has lived for over 11 years without my children half of the week (when they were living with their father) now helps the sad mother in me.

AND this brought me very close to the cancer patients and their relatives I was holding space for on November 10, 2007.

So Open Space really is an ongoing spiritual journey for me, deeply rooted in my everyday life. Peace, for my understanding, begins with my own peace of mind. The principles of OS are a big help in accepting what IS for me.

## Open Space - Living with Greater Simplicity and Happiness

Diane Gibeault

The greatest gift I received when discovering Open Space Technology (OST) with Harrison Owen years ago, was to see life with a different mindset that can be summarized in two words, “*letting go*”. Those words, along with the open invitation which also characterizes the OST method, have opened up space in my life by bringing me peace of mind and peace with those I love as well as with those who are not my friends.

*Letting go* has allowed me to give my children more of that healthy space they need to become stronger and happy persons. We know that too much love and good intentions can be restricting but it’s hard to do less. Understanding how “less can be more” helps. It made me more serene and at peace with ailing elders that I deeply love by accepting the limitations of the help I can give, that is, by respecting the amount of advice and assistance they choose to take.

The open invitation was consistent with my husband and I consciously creating space with our children and our extended family where the necessary conditions for good communication existed. For example, Sunday diners, a protected time with our teenagers, is now remembered by our grown up children as extremely precious anchoring moments. Came with that, the climate of “any topic of interest” can be put on the table!

Being open and letting go permeate all the principles of Open Space. The first principle tells us that people who show up are the right ones. I make good use of it by focusing on what I have more interest in whether it is an event, voluntary work or the type of facilitation or training I choose to do. I value the people that show up by giving my full attention. When people are not returning my calls or not responding to my invitation, I use to assume too quickly that it was because of something I did or did not do. Instead of worrying about it, I now assume they have other reasons. They generally do. In the end, whatever happens is what was possible. Yes that is the second principle about being detached from regrets and blame. This takes a lot of monkeys off our backs and is quite healthy both for mind and body.

I am better at letting go of external expectations and timelines and it makes for a more relaxed and pleasurable lifestyle. The law of the two feet lets me leave a family gathering, a party, a meeting or a conference when I feel I do not want to be there, when I am no longer interested, learning or contributing. By making a more efficient use of my time, I give myself the gift of time to be productive or just to enjoy life and be happy and in peace - which is what we are basically striving for every day.

In learning to integrate Open Space in our work and our lives, the hardest part is learning to let go. It is the most rewarding one.

## What is living in open space?

Doug Germann

For one thing, the open space is the place between us where we meet, the place between us where meeting can emerge.

For another, living in open space is both receptivity and voicing: readiness to receive other's gifts or withholding of gifts; giving voice to one's truth. Speak truth for hope.

Third, it is about making a larger world, large enough for all the souls to live within it.

Fourth, it is to invite others into our world. It is opening our selves: vulnerable, unknowing. It is opening our selves to surprise, sweet surprise. It is a pressed together, shaken down, overflowing, embrace to excess.

Fifth, it is mixing, getting out there and mixing. Seeing what good others have to share.

Sixth, it is easy-going, not pushy, rather welcoming, hosting, asking help, giving help before it is asked. It is generous in both giving and receiving.

Seventh, it must be lived to be understood, or rather, to be known. It is entirely likely and unlikely to the mind before that, but after that, only what is, only natural, people coming together.

Open space is not empty

Instead fertile fecund bumpy

Inviting

We go to it not empty but overflowing

Seeking to give without control

Willing to receive without expecting

Expecting limits us & we are without limits

To live in open space is to

Invite

—help

—engagement

—meeting

Be invited

—to help

—to leave  
Be inviting  
Help before you're invited  
Let invitations come and go  
& not count the difference

Live it before you know it  
Live it to know it  
Open space gently takes your hand  
Splash some on your face and body  
Listen—give voice—listen—live

:- Doug.

## “What is your practice of Open Space?”

Eva P Svensson

This is an inquiry into how each of us bring open space into our lives, how we live Open Space.

*What is your practice of Open Space? That was the inquiry - how do I explain that I thought? From being a “traditional HR manager” and a new born independent consultant to not only a big fan of Open Space Technology as a form for making people realize their potential but also “desperately” trying to live the principles of Open Space...*

The journey begins for almost 50 years ago; I was brought up in an “ordinary” environment in a small community in Sweden where the main message was more or less that - “do what is best for others and be like everyone else.” Nothing too wrong with that I guess but my feeling is that I decided to come to this world with a bit more - but that I was not aware of until much later on in life. What does that has to do with Open Space? More or less everything. When I heard about Open Space for the first time my being instantly knew that this was something for me, so I looked it up on the internet - up come a web page from a man who lived just 10 km from me, I phoned him, we had lunch, three weeks later I was a participant on one of his workshop - “working with Open Space Technology” - and I was hooked! (And now we are friends and working together - so Open Space gives you a lot of friends as well - nearby and around the globe ☺)

### Trust the process

I have seen many methods, philosophies, approaches etc “walking by” in my former role as an HR Professional but nothing has come into and under my skin as Open Space. How come? I think it is the part that everyone has to take responsibility for him/herself. If you want something done- take action - if you don’t have enough passion - don’t expect someone else to have it. Trust the process - that is a common used phrase even in Swedish (though we say it in English☺) but I never saw anything like it - really like it - until I found Open Space. But the main reason I guess as I am sitting writing and reflecting is that it is a way to take care of all the potential that exist in a person, in a department, in an organization, in a community, in a family, in every single environment that includes human beings.

### **Release the potential**

I believe that it is such a waste - the way that we are conducting most of our businesses today. There are so much potential out there in all employees that are never being “used” or taken care of. I believe that one of my practices of Open Space is to show, make visible how much knowledge, passion, heart, interest that already exists in our business life. The biggest challenge is to convince the management team. In a world that is both rapid and complex - “raplex” - it is not possible to manage a company/business/organization in the old fashion way - with managers in charge that are supposed to know everything. We have to take notice of all the knowledge that already exists in the organization. And for this Open Space is a wonderful method.

As for myself - how I live Open Space - as I said before - sometimes desperately trying to live the principles, not always easy in an environment with a lot of demands both internally and externally. The principles that have settled the most in me are “whoever comes is the right people” and “whenever its start is the right time”. It is so comforting not to focus on the one who is not there - and instead on those who showed up ☺ and be grateful for their energy. And being a person who more or less always arrives prompt, it has made me a bit more relaxed when guests arrives late, but the most it has helped me is to really trust the process in my professional work and to place the responsibility where it should be - with the individuals themselves.

### **The wisdom is in the room**

As a consultant I guess I am a bit different as well as an effect of the thoughts from Open Space - even when I am not using OST as the method I try to implement the thoughts, and one simple way is that I never go “checking” on groups when they are in group-work in break out spaces in ordinary workshops. And I always believe that the wisdom is within the group - or in the room I am currently in - that the participants hold the wisdom for whatever needs to be solved or be discussed.

### **Follow my heart and my feet**

Living Open Space is for me also to stand up for me, for my passion, my inspiration, the ideas I have that I want to give both hands and feet. This I do mostly by my work but also I am trying to take care of my own needs and doing what is right for me before what is right for others all in the meaning that if I do what is good for me - it will be good for others as well... This could result in prioritizing my riding lessons before most other activities or my inner life before going to visit family.

This is maybe not always the most appreciative way of living from friends and relatives since they don’t always follow my way and that could from time to time be hard but still worth the price. I see upon this as using the “Law of my two feet” - I try to follow what has heart and meaning and to be in

constellations where I can tap into my potential and live my life - because after all - that is my interpretation of living open space...

As a summarize - living open space is a journey, a guideline, a mystery, a passion, a challenge - and it is worth all the trying.

With love and appreciation

Eva P Svensson

## Living peace

Florian Fischer

There is a special space  
where I'm studying peace,  
studying almost permanently,  
how to welcome peace, how to practice peace,  
how to hold peace, how to live peace:  
It is the space between  
»This is what I intended – but this is what happened«.  
An interval, a void, a break, a silence.  
It is the difference between frustration and acceptance,  
it is the way from No to Yes – and from Yes to No,  
it is the insight, that imagination,  
not only sometimes but every time,  
switches to illusion in the moment of realisation,  
it is the deep breathe before agreeing the change,  
and when it seems another person is changing my mind,  
it is the space to transform  
my ill humor about dependance into humbleness  
to see that they themselves are not less dependent.  
Sometimes it is the waiting-room  
to host a thrilling idea from conception to birth,  
sometimes it is an open space where a fear disappears  
and something dissolves just like that.  
In any case it is the playground between my own self  
and the self which is working on self-organization,  
It is all only about my inner peace,  
my only possible contribution to peace in the world.

Rodalquilar, 30.12.2007

## [untitled]

Olga Zolotareva

Two years ago I participated in an Open Space for the first time. I saw immediately how this method differs from all other forms of group work. I realized, then, that in the learning process the most important and valuable thing is each and every person. This has helped me in my work as a trainer. And it has made it easier to work with the resistance of participants in trainings.

Also, the principles of Open Space have opened up for me many, many possibilities not just professionally but also in life. Applying them in practice in day-to-day life, I have stopped being afraid of being myself, I've become more tolerant, and more understanding of the people around me. My relationships with my friends and relatives have improved. Of course, this method is not another one of those panaceas, but its principles have become the principles of my life. And now they help me live every moment of life to its fullest.

## Living peace

Raffi Aftandelian

it's more an aspiration  
than a full-on practice!  
but, hey,  
it's a start!

dingggg!  
diiiiing!  
dinggggggggggg!

how  
can i live  
in compassionate curiosity  
in every moment?

breathing  
and  
sitting  
in silence

how  
can i  
notice my  
numbness,  
boredom,  
pain,  
shame,  
and addictions  
and  
all the other gunk  
and take that as  
an essential (unwrapped?) gift to joy?

breathing  
and  
sitting  
in silence

what  
is the opportunity  
to serve  
in this moment?

how  
can i  
express gratitude  
for everyone  
and everything?

to  
bee  
continued

## What do we do with the invitation we don't want to hear?

Wendy Farmer-O'Neil

*By now the pain has taken my breath. I am beyond tears. I feel them starting to dry in sticky salt lines down my face, throat, chest. He presses in again, fingers digging under my ribs and up into my soft center. Pain screws into my core. Is that my heart he's pushing on, I wonder? I want to push his hands away—turn away, run away from the pain, both physical and emotional. But I accepted this invitation. This invitation to heal, to give voice, and unfold into a full-blooded integrated life. I know what needs to happen next, I just don't know if I'm brave enough or strong enough. I know how to do this, I tell myself. It's my job after all isn't it? To open space in the tight places, the hard places, the constricted and conflicted places. So I let go—let the pain in and the sound out.*

*Now floating in that intimate inner space, the pain begins to release its gifts. Memories—of being controlled, of being inappropriate and unacceptable. There's shame here: the shame of helplessness and powerlessness. Then come memories of controlling. Even more shame erupts. You know shame don't you? Can you feel it now? Maybe a heat creeping up your neck to your cheeks? Maybe a cold serpent coiling in your belly? Where does it hide in your body?*

*How can I bring this closer, I wonder? I'm an Open Space facilitator, how can I look at this—or talk about it? That sometimes I'm terrified and try to control things in my life, people I love. The pain of seeing the truth of that mingles with the shame and fear. A toxic cocktail waiting to be drunk. I'm supposed to get intimate with this?*

*And still my practice is with me. My body knows how to open space. I feel it already beginning to shift—a space clearing in my center—an energetic container of compassion and openness to whatever comes. And there it is—Open Space—space enough for the pain, the truth, the shame, the fear, the terror. Not doing anything with it. Just holding it. An invitation going out: you're welcome here, it's safe. Unfold, unfurl. Let your deep shadows expand and their shining darkness reveal the gifts you hold.*

*I ground myself again, moment to moment. Breathing first, getting up off the mat and returning to the chair, making the next appointment, getting in the car and driving to the ferry. All the while the dark unfolding in the open space inside me. Throwing out tendrils of chaos and discordance to shake and reshape me.*

What do we do with the invitation we don't want to hear? What do we do in the places of fear, terror, pain, or resistance where we would MUCH rather

shut down, close space, turn away and not see? How do I stay open in those places? And what happens then? The invitation we don't want to hear is often the invitation to crack open. That is the growing edge of my practice right now.

My practice of Opening has deepened over the years. Like any liberating practice, first there is the joyfulness of Open Space seeping into the heart and the center of the body. I become more present in the workspace of OST and more present in life--the more joyful, buoyant part of life, and get addicted to it. This has shifted now to what's not pleasant, not comfortable or would ever be judged to be acceptable. It's become about deepening to opening the door to the dark places, to the things shoved off into a corner, pushed down, disowned. My open space practice allows them to come up and I hold space for what has been unloveable in the self.

My growing edge is about learning to work with *that*—to get close and intimate with what's ugly, fearful, terrifying, and to *see what happens...*

*He: Where are you?*

*Me: I'm in an urban area. It's run down.*

*He: How do you feel?*

*Me: It's creepy. Lonely.*

*He: Why?*

*Me: There's no one here. It's empty.*

*He: Yes. What are you doing?*

*Me: I'm walking around. I have my gi and my hakima under my arm and I'm carrying terracotta planters. I'm walking by the storefronts and smashing the planters on the ground in front.*

*He: What are you feeling?*

*Me: Anxious, scared, purposeful.*

*He: Why?*

*Me: I open the space wider inside. Let the feelings in deeper. Breathe and hold the space open for them. In a few minutes they release and I know: I hear people's voices judging me. They think I'm making a mess, breaking things. I feel ashamed of that and there is pain from being misunderstood. But I know that my students are coming soon. I'm doing this to prepare the ground for them—so they can practice and learn.*

With Invitation it was the same. At first it was fun to issue invitations and to respond to them. There's the joyful networking, the synkairostic connections. Then that changed and I began to hear the invitations to engage with what's not pleasant. Like Pema Chodron's teachings on *shenpa*: when someone's presence or words invite negativity. There's an invitation to engage with what's uncomfortable, with the shadow.

The invitation echoes out into the quantum field. For example, if I have a conflict with my friend and hold on to that suffering, then the resonance of that is what fills the container between us—it's what we eat and breathe and sleep—what the nutrient matrix is composed of—it acts upon us as a real force, at a vibrational level. And the conflict usually deepens and solidifies. Have you seen this in your life?

If I create a different invitation, if I can find the strength or insight or distance to generate an appreciative positive field, then I fill the container between us with that. The space opens up wider and there is more possibility. I'm generating a field for my self and my friend that is more life affirming. I'm working at that energetic level of field generation and I'm seeing real world change. I'm learning to do this while also remaining integrally embodied. That means staying fully awake and giving voice to anger, pain, hurt, or fear, while at the same time remembering to witness and hold the true nature of my friend and myself—and to generate the invitation of what I want between us.

Sometimes I get exhausted and I have to make a choice: do I close the space or do I keep opening and don't let the space *collapse*. How do I prevent it from collapsing? A start is consciously choosing to distract from the pain and opening and holding a space for it until I am restored enough to pick up the work again. Like letting a field rest fallow.

And I keep the space from collapsing by remembering the invitation. I am invited to the work, yes, and I am also invited to self-care. My attention is drawn not only to the work of the True and the Good, but also to the Beautiful. The work of the world integrated with the work and care of the Spirit.

I'm learning to hold space for the disappointing, unloveable, frustrating. Learning to just be with that; opening the heart in compassion, not pushing it away, not suppressing anything. It's about being open to feeling crappy, open to immense pain and fear. This is a new form of invitation for me. I am beginning to combine my OS practice and my Aikido practice to engage with the pain. Open space supports me to be present with compassion, to open and allow it in, to issue and respond to the invitation to connect and to be patient and hold it all, just witnessing. Aikido embodies the discomfort. It roots and grounds it into action—allowing the body itself to be the mechanism of transformation.

In Takemusu Aikido, we say that **the purpose of conflict is harmony**. I use what I have learned in OS to work with this. I work to remember that whatever arises is exactly the right thing for me to experience at this time. That no matter what I might wish for, whenever it begins is the right time. That whatever happens is the outcome of how I am right now—not how I wish I was or think I am, but functionally how I am right now. And as much as I wish I was a saint or perfect or infallible or shining, I have, as my dear friend Judi likes to say, a terminal case of human-beingness. And sometimes, it's just over—the

only way to restore harmony is to let it go, let it die, and see what gets born from the ashes.

From Aikido, I am learning how to blend and flow with the resistance. How to begin to see each conflict as a pivot point. And that the practice of Takemusu is one of infinite variation of response—just as we talk in OS of the entire field of potentiality—Aikido gives me the opportunity to experience this directly in an embodied way.

Sometimes the invitation is bigger than it appears to be, or I was not prepared enough to be surprised, or there was just no way to be prepared. Have you ever opened a space and then thought, “Oh my God, what have I done?! My personal energy is not what I thought it’d be. This is bigger, scarier, deeper, heavier, than I was prepared for”?

When my mother-in-law Charlene died 18 months ago, I had just finished opening space for day one of a three-day exploration of abundance and sustainability on my island. There was no way to stop holding the space. I was still engaged. Even though I was grieving and stepped back as much as I could, (deep gratitude to Raffi who was co-facilitating with me) I was absolutely connected to that space until it closed.

It's like that when we open space for our own growth and transformation, we can't close the space until it's over. The space stays open! I'd have to purposefully, consciously close the space- that's a kind of choiceless choice. 'This fear, sorrow, or pain, will never end', I might think, 'this kind of transformation is too hard', and yet the space for that transformation has been opened. I have to keep it open. The size may change, but it can't collapse without the conscious act of closing. I'd have to say I don't want to transform. I can either continue the process of transformation or accept the consequences. Can I live with the consequences of closing that space?

This is about being open to looking at where we're closed. I believe that each of us receives invitations from life that we don't want to hear. Maybe it's where our wounds lie. Maybe it's where our greatest gifts lie dormant waiting to be let out into the light. Maybe it's a place where you're too terrified to look. Maybe it's a place you're too tired to look. Maybe it's a place you've given up on. Maybe it's a place of your dreams. Maybe it's a place that shines so brightly and so wild you can't believe in it.

And if I want to get integral about it and zoom out to the world-centric perspective, I could say that the planet, the Gaia, is issuing invitations right now that most of us don't want to hear. And out to the Kosmos-centric, where the invitation is felt as a deep urgency, a pregnant pushing at the very center of our being. Are you open to hearing that invitation? Or does what it calls you to scare you into turning away and closing down?

Opening to the invitations of life, especially the ones I don't want to hear, calls me to be fully embodied. It requires that I fully embody my practice—that I open space in my body, with the very cells of my body, that I hold space physically and energetically inside of me, that I issue and respond to invitations to and from the self, that I ground it all in the present moments of my life—stretching myself between loam and sky. That I both stumble and soar. That I fail, over and over, and in that failing crack open to what's next.

All I know, and that doesn't feel like very much, is that opening to these unwanted invitations is part of the journey to authentic maturity. Some people call that journey freedom, some call it liberation, some call it wisdom, some call it enlightenment. My working definition of freedom is the measure of my capacity to respond meaningfully to what I love. How free I am is measured in the dynamic balance of my ability to take responsibility for What Matters Most.

For me, I see OS as a deep practice of liberation. It contains a sacred surrender and embrace. A surrender not to anything or anyone, but a surrender through the principles and practices and discipline and devotion. A surrender of egoity and embracing of an authentic, mature, autonomous self that unfolds into service to others and ultimately into service to Spirit.

So, in that spirit of service I have taken a risk and talked about the stuff I'm not proud of. Talked about the warts and shoved-down places. Yes, I screw up with my kids; I try to control my husband, I get tired, and grouchy and closed, I make huge mistakes, I fall short of my expectations for myself, I've hurt those I love—and all that just probably makes me human. What my open space practice does for me right now, is allows me to acknowledge it, to have some compassion for myself, to look right into the face of the invitation I don't want to hear and embrace it.

## **Appendices**

## Four Practices for Living Peace

Michael Herman

*Some years ago, Chris Corrigan and Michael Herman had a [conversation](#) about what they called "The Four Practices of Open Space," in the course of teaching Open Space as the practice of Inviting Organization. I asked Michael for the latest version of the Four Practices. He said there wasn't any latest version, a version, that is, that was finished, and never finished. I asked again. And then he sent this. I like it for its messiness (I imagine someone with ruffled hair), meandering, honesty and earnestness, a thin veil for a deeper clarity, emerging quietly by itself. Enjoy! [ed.]*

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bad news, raffi. or maybe the following is something that we can use... started out to be proof that there was nothing to say. and maybe the story of that is the story we need. i'll finish writing it now and click send. then you tell me if it's anything interesting.

i spent a couple of years thinking and writing and talking and teaching (on and on) about what some of us started calling the "four practices." in the end, i decided they didn't matter. much as i'd like to, it never makes sense to write them down. they might not be doings. or maybe not four doings. or they are different than what i can yet articulate. here's what they might be called today...

1. open heart
2. invite perceive let go take notes rest...

these four practices are still a bit jumbled and muddy, you see. but if that's so, then how do we know there are four of them? well, because there are four quadrants. in the story we've made up. (that we actually borrowed from ken wilber. who borrowed and blended it from everyone, or so it would appear from his bibliographies.)

in this story, there is an inside and and outside. there is a self. as in, me, myself. and a bigger body that is us. these dimensions flow together. one swirl, through four seasons. inside me, then inside of us. outside of us, the stuff we can see. and finally me or you, standing out in the crowd.

yes, we could write these things down, the things to do inside and outside, as myself and everyone. we could call them The Four Practices and it might sound good, but it wouldn't be what i or we actually \*do\*. what we actually practice. bother. what is it that i'm actually doing when i do what i do?

years ago i opened a space in australia. something more than 100 teachers talking about the future of education, in a huge skybox at an even huger cricket stadium. talk about space. huge sunny green field space. and practice. not the cricketers, the groundskeepers. taking care of things. taking care of that huge space. getting it ready for the next big thing.

a lot of practice is like that. we're just doing the things we do, the things that we can do, the things that we are. groundskeepers keeping up the grounds. when i finished my opening and everything got underway, breakout groups and all of that, one woman came over to see me. to find out something about me. what she really wanted to know was what i was doing when i opened the space. actually, what i was doing \*right before\* i walked around the circle and did my little opening briefing. what i was doing while the big chief leader gave his three-minute welcoming speech?

i asked her what it looked like i was doing. "being space," she said. "that's pretty close to what it felt like i was doing," i said. and then we had a nice chat about space. what we are. how we move. meetings and organizations and all kinds of other things. everything that comes after "being space." the four practices is the story, a story, about being space.

i know the first practice has something to do with opening heart. remembering, appreciating, rolling around in the space that i am before i am anything else. i choose to remember that i'm more than the things i do, or have, or have done. more than my circumstances. bigger than just my body. there are thoughts and feelings and sensations all bubbling up, washing through me, or over me. but where do all these things come from? or go? the best word i have for the answer to that is "space."

it's all around us, yes, but there is also some sense of an inner space, mind space, heart space. i find it in the physical center of body. heart space. so that's the first practice. that's the first thing i do. find that space. touch it. settle into it. rest. enjoy. delight. slurp. pick your favorite flavor of satisfaction. not so much a practice, a doing, as an experiencing. so the first thing is to just have that experience, before we start, a meeting or anything else. awareness of space. in space. as space. before anything.

the second practice (and everything else) comes after that. but what to call it? something about clarity. noticing what is. looking, speaking, inviting, and the like are all too strong, or too specific, for what i experience, because it's not just one of them. it could be any of them. "noticing" seems the cleanest way to say it, but that's not enough. there's some sort of expressing, as well. maybe this second practice could be called "bringing the inside out." it might be as complex as a meeting invitation or as simple as saying "aaaahhhh..." this practice includes all the ways, that i (and you) have for bringing what's inside heart space out -- where others can notice it, too. hearth space.

this follows so quickly, so automatically, from heart space, that slowing it down to talk about it here really just sounds silly. and then, everything else happens even faster, if that's even possible. we send the invitation, or sigh the sigh. we say the idea, do the opening briefing, or share any other expression of "what i think..." or "what i see..." or "what i feel..." and so on. and then we never really know what will happen next. it's all a big experiment, soup without a recipe, if we let it go that way.

let it go. the third practice. letting go, in the sense of letting movement happen. supporting movement. sometimes i call it "letting go forward." trusting movement. letting things (and people) be as they are, and do what they do. the sensation of being carried along, riding the flow of everything. the opposite would be a sort of swimming upstream, trying to get back to how things were. or trying to hold things in place. or swimming downstream, trying to get to someplace we think we should be, instead of being where we are. letting go uses whatever it is that's already happening. we ride the wave or run the river that already is. sometimes surfing, sometimes floating, but always actively choosing between the two. controlling self instead of others.

finally, in the midst of all that, every so often, there is grounding. a moment of rest, between surfing and floating. just sinking. getting feet back on the ground. making some sort of mark on the earth. digging in. leaving footprints. in meetings, it's taking notes and publishing proceedings. elsewhere, it includes everything from "taking a stand" or sometimes we say "standing our ground" to things as wispy as taking a nap, letting body sink into something soft. always and everywhere, owning our place in the world.

opening heart space. bringing what's inside, out. letting it go. owning what shows up. (rinse and repeat.) or we could say "passion, contribution, learning, and responsibility," but usually we say open space technology runs on "passion bounded by responsibility." and we invite participants to "maximize their own learning and contribution."

it's open space technology, the open space we live in, and the open space that lives in us. we can tease these things apart in words, but mostly we need to live them all together in the world. the four practices of living peace.

## Contributor Biographies

Below are biographies and contact information of most of the people who contributed to *Living Peace*.



**Harrison** is President of H.H.Owen and Co. His academic background and training centered on the nature and function of myth, ritual and culture. In the middle '60s, he left academe to work with a variety of organizations including small West African villages, urban (American and African) community organizations, Peace Corps, Regional Medical Programs, National Institutes of Health, and Veterans Administration. Along the way he discovered that his study of myth, ritual and culture had direct application to these social systems. In 1979 he created H.H.Owen and Company in order to explore the culture of organizations in transformation as a theorist and practicing consultant. Harrison convened the First International Symposium on Organization Transformation, and is the originator of Open Space Technology. He is the author of *Spirit: Transformation and Development in Organizations*, *Leadership Is, Riding the Tiger, Open Space Technology: A Users Guide* (Second Edition. Berrett-Koehler), *The Millennium Organization, Tales From Open Space (editor)*, *Expanding Our Now: The Story of Open Space Technology* (Berrett-Koehler), *The Spirit of Leadership* (Berrett-Koehler) and *The Power of Spirit: How Organizations Transform* (Berrett- Koehler).

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Since 1990, **Anne Stadler** has worked with people and groups that seek to open space for the emergence of spirited leadership and appropriate forms for their collective activity. She has over a decade of experience in guiding the formation of emergent organizations: as a founder and principal organizer of Spirited Work, an Open Space learning community of practice, linking conscious evolution with practical action.

She is a pioneer and fluent practitioner of Open Space Technology and

Appreciative Inquiry as well as other forms that open space for practical co-creative activity. She has worked globally with a diversity of organizations, including corporations, educational institutions, arts organizations, non-profits and community groups.

She has seventeen years of experience as an award-winning television producer, generating documentaries and special programs that illuminated community issues and were produced in collaboration with community leaders. She also worked for 12 years as a founder and community organizer of a broadly based coalition to end war. She is also a co-founder of Friends of Third Place Commons, Peacetrees Vietnam, and Solidarity, a new effort to support Green Jobs for All.

She enjoys every minute of life with her family, friends, strangers and the natural world.

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**Birgitt Williams and Ward Williams** are life partners and business partners. They are committed to assisting organizations operate in ways that are life nurturing and to demonstrating that life nurturing organizations have tangible, positive outcomes. They assist individuals and organizations to have great benefits from working with the four levels of consciousness: mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional. Birgitt and Ward have a holistic approach to business success. They are founders of the Genuine Contact™ program, a blended approach to achieve successful organizational change. They love working with Open Space Technology.

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**Zelle and Maureen** (pictured in “Living in Invitation ~ The Experience of Grace Immersion”) open spaces where organizations and individuals can find connection, meaning, and practical purpose in order to better balance people and profits, both being integral in the health of the organization and the community it resides within.

Maureen and Zelle are the principals of Engaging the Soul @ Work – an international company helping organizations, big and small, to create places where people actually look forward to going to work on a daily basis. They have worked with such companies as BP, AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals, The World Relief Organization, BP (British Petroleum), SAS (Computer Software), Fast Company Magazine, Shell Oil, University of Chicago Graduate School of Business, Under One Sky (Non-profit organization) and the U.K. Government Sector.

Maureen K. McCarthy is an international management consultant, keynote speaker, author and senior executive coach whose business focus is on engaging the soul at work, which ultimately results in increased profits and performance.

Zelle Nelson is a facilitator, international management consultant, coach and author. Zelle’s ability to hold space for others helps businesses to create conversational spaces that inspire, as well as physical spaces where organizations flourish - both kinds of spaces are places where we can accomplish our best work.

Maureen and Zelle are in the process of co-authoring the book *The State of Grace Document* which outlines a new way to create foundations of trust and connection in both business and personal relationships. The State of Grace Document concept is currently being used on many continents within corporations, families, colleagues, schools, non-profit organizations, churches, small business owners, couples, friends, etc. You’ll find that it applies to any relationship situation that exists because the creation of the Document builds a strong foundation and then also helps you return to peace if the need arises.

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**Ralph Copleman** lives in Lawrenceville, New Jersey (USA). He first experienced open space in 1986 and instantly gave up trying to make sense of anything. He thinks this was a wise choice, but the picture is cloudy. He is certain that open space is extremely important to him, though he hopes he never pins down why. Ralph dwells in a state of perpetual open space held for him by the best facilitator in the world, his amazing wife Joyce.

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**Arun Wakhlu**, born in August, 1955 (Kashmir, India) is the Chairman of Pragati Leadership Institute Pvt. Ltd., a spiritually inspired Leadership, Organisational Development and Coaching institute based in Pune, India. He started Pragati in 1986 with his partner Anu. An international facilitator and coach, he has worked in the Tata Administrative Service, as a member of the leading Tata Group in India. Arun holds a Bachelor of Technology (Electrical Engineering) from the Indian Institute of Technology (Delhi), and a PG Diploma in Business Administration from the Indian Institute of Management (Ahmedabad, India). He has designed and facilitated a number of innovative leadership development programs for leading Indian and international organizations including the Government of India.

As the author of the award winning Book “Managing From The Heart”, Arun has helped pioneer and operationalize the concepts of “Wholesome Development” and “Wholesome Leadership” aimed at unfolding inner and outer freedom for prosperity with peace. He is currently engaged in project “Awaken I”, with the vision of good work for all. He is ever grateful to his family, colleagues, friends, clients and life.

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**Alan Stewart, PhD**, facilitates group processes underpinned by guiding principles which encourage participants to converse [Latin *con versare* - to turn or to dance together] about questions that matter to them, with the starting point of 'We are in this together and to treat each other well.'

For when people interact in such contexts they invariably feel alive, inspired, connected, surprised, engaged, empowered, responsible and open to possibility.

What else could be at the root of the enjoyable, enriching, enlivening and energising experiencing from which productive outcomes are spontaneously co-created in conditions conducive to conversing?

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**Caitlin Frost** is a facilitator, coach and communications specialist. She has worked with clients as diverse as the Premier of British Columbia, the Native Brotherhood of BC and served as editor for the *Womanyst* newspaper. Caitlin is known for her work designing learning communities and has trained deeply with Byron Katie and Marshall Rosenberg.

**Chris Corrigan** brings 15 years experience with a wide variety of groups and organizations to his work. He is an internationally recognized Open Space Technology facilitator, a trainer and a practitioner of dialogue and deliberation methods.

### **Aine Corrigan-Frost**

Aine Corrigan-Frost is a life learner, circus arts performer, actor and an artist. She possesses a gifted imagination, a deep love of literature, story and narrative and an outstanding auditory learning capacity. She is currently studying craftmaking, dance, musical theatre, voice and acting.

### **Finn Corrigan-Frost**

Another life learner, Finn Corrigan-Frost is currently studying acting, golf and soccer. He is also deeply immersed in learning about digital technology, fantasy gaming and the various forms of social arts and entertainment media. His mentors expose him to a variety of arts, imaginative worlds and games.

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I live in Chicago and work everywhere. Since 1991, as [MichaelHermanAssociates](#), I've supported leaders and initiatives, in corporate and community organizations, on six continents. I lead all kinds of meetings and projects. I practice, teach, and write about [InvitingLeadership](#), informed by [OpenSpaceTechnology](#) and other [Methodologies](#).

My wife and I are restoring an old Chicago bungalow, in a quiet little neighborhood, on the west bank of the Chicago River.

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**Jo Toepfer** (1968) has been working as a consultant in organizational transformation since 1995. He worked in

Central and Eastern Europe, Russia, CIS countries and Central Asia for a number of years. In 2000 he was trained by Michael M Pannwitz and Gabriela Ender in Open Space facilitation and by Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff in the art of large group facilitation. Since then Jo Toepfer has facilitated Open Space gatherings in 16 countries with a wide variety of sponsors, occasions, number of participants and time of duration.

Jo Toepfer was also involved as a trainer in about 10 Open Space Technology Training events in Russia, Hungary, Ukraine, Northern Ireland and Germany together with Michael M Pannwitz, Mia Konstantinidou and others. In addition, Jo Toepfer is member of the board of the 'Berlin Open Space Cooperative', administrator of 'openspacedeutsch' (mailing list about open space in German and the 'open space worldscape' - a data base in the world wide web that records open space events.

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**Catherine Pfaehler Senn** Born in 1959. Lic.oec.HSG in 1984. Encountered Open Space in the OT7 conference in 1989. Worked in the insurance industry, co-organizing scientific projects and international Open Space conferences, and since 1996 has been the administrative manager of [www.wohngeist.ch](http://www.wohngeist.ch), a sustainable workshop creating fine interiors in Basel , together with her husband Stefan Senn.

From her first marriage, Andrea was born in 1990 and Sarah in 1992. She has been facilitating Open Space conferences since 2005.

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**Diane Gibeault** is an experienced bilingual consultant in facilitation and organizational transformation. An International Association of Facilitators (IAF) Certified Professional Facilitator™, Diane trained in 1996 on Open Space Technology with author Harrison Owen. She is also an active member of the Open Space Institute of Canada and offers OST training regularly in Canada and internationally, in French and in English. For more articles and information see the Open Space section on [www.dianegibeault.com](http://www.dianegibeault.com)

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I'm german, born in 1940, I'm married for the second time since 32 years, I'm father of a son Kim and two daughters, Nele and Shirin. I'm living together with my wife Katharina parttime in Berlin and Rodalquilar / Southern Spain, there (together with our daughter Shirin)  
we hold space for holiday-guests. <http://www.rodalquilar.com>

I studied design, was staff-member

of Quickborner Team, the origin of »MetaPlan«, the sustainable german contribution to group methods for shaping the future. I co-founded two companies in the field of corporate design / corporate communication, specialised myself in running workshops to search the hidden agenda behind the intention of our clients. I read about Open Space Technology first in 1996 published by Kathrina Petri in the periodical »OrganisationsEntwicklung«. I welcomed OST enthusiastically, because it fit one to one to what I was looking for. Instantly I asked my old friend Michael M Pannwitz to apply OST to the development of my own company. So we did.

I sold my halfpart of the company to my partner Peter by reason of personal health.

Together with Michael we did a trip to the US to take part in the yearly FutureSearch-Network meeting, which was facilitated in OST by Ralph Copleman. A few time later I got trained in FutureSearch by Marve Weisbord and Sandra Janoff and in Open Space Technology by Harrison Owen, which both took place in Berlin, where Michael invited the originators. What I've got from these outstanding originators and what I've got in taking and giving part within the community of Open Space became essence of my live: one of the best resources I ever had.

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**Raffi Aftandelian (USA)** is a facilitator, trainer, and consultant. He was based in Russia from 1997 until 2006 (Moscow and Nazran, Ingushetia) working with NGO's in conflict resolution, peacemaking, and refugee issues. He has conducted workshops and worked with NGO's in Tajikistan, Georgia, different parts of the North Caucasus, Canada, and the United States. His experience as a facilitator and trainer have brought him to work with a wide variety of groups, including California inmates, American youth with disabilities, Chechen and Georgian refugees, Tajik nonprofit sector leaders, and Russian corporate coaches and trainers.

He's known on three continents for his spiced popcorn and prepares a mean salad. He can occasionally be spotted blowing soap bubbles using a battery-powered soap bubble pistol in public places. He currently is in kindergarten, proud of the C+ grades he has received at the local Zen center.

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**Wendy Farmer-O'Neil** Raised by a family of itinerant quail in rural Southern Ontario, Wendy soon realized she had a talent for pecking away at the emergent. When she is not busy being a complete Fool, she moonlights as a Novatrix. She can occasionally be found impersonating an organization and community transformation professional. Wendy is a performance Artist of the Open Space Lineage. She is pioneering the concept of facilitation for liberation. In her imagination, she is the fulltime mother of three awesome boys. She is also an ordained minister, a certified horticulturist, a certified Spiral Dynamics practitioner, the Dean of Accidental Education at Titanic University, and an ardent student of Takemusu Aikido.

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## Resources

The books, practices, and other materials listed below are by no means exhaustive. This may be an initial attempt at listing some of the many things that may aid in the personal practice of Open Space. Additions and comments are welcome. Thanks to all those who contributed to this list.

Adler, Margot. *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America Today*. Penguin, 1997  
Especially chapter 11, religions of paradox and play.

Arrien, Angeles. *The Four-Fold Way™: Walking the Paths of the Warrior, Teacher, Healer, and Visionary*. HarperOne, 1993.

Perhaps the classic book on the personal practice of Open Space, drawing on the wisdom and teachings embodied in the Medicine Wheel.

Bacovain, H. (translator). *The Way of a Pilgrim & The Pilgrim continues His Way - Spiritual Classics From Russia*. Bantam Doubleday Dell, 2000 .

Described by one Zen teacher as one of the most inspiring books on practice, this book is a first person narrative of a 19<sup>th</sup> century peasant who wanders across Russia in search of a life filled with Spirit.

Bayda, Ezra. *ZEN Heart: Simple Advice for Living with Mindfulness and Compassion*. Shambhala, 2008.

Bayda's latest book on Zen practice.

Boroson, Martin and Gilvab-Cartwright, Chris. *Becoming Me: A Story of Creation*. Frances Lincoln Childrens Books, 2002.

A children's book on creation that probably is not hazardous for adults, co-authored by a UK-based OST facilitator and psychotherapist. Enjoy the inspiring video introduction to the book [here](#).

Corrigan, Chris. [\*The Tao of Holding Space\*](#). Chris Corrigan, 2006. Web.

Chris Corrigan's learnings about holding space - the essential practice in working with Open Space Technology- as expressed through the *Tao te Ching*.

Corrigan, Chris and Herman, Michael, eds. [\*Open Space Technology: a User's NON-guide\*](#). 2002. Web.

First published on the Open Space electronic discussion list, OSlist, this is an edited and extended conversation on Open Space Technology and Open Space between 37 practitioners.

Gerrard, Don. *One Bowl: A Guide to Eating for Body and Spirit*. Da Capo Press, 2001.

How to eat in the present.

Hamilton, Elizabeth. *Untrain Your Parrot: And Other No-nonsense Instructions on the Path of Zen*. Shambhala, 2007

A highly practical book on living in the present by a San Diego Zen teacher and student of Charlotte Joko Beck.

Hiltner, Carol. *The Altai Chronicles: Tablets of Light*. Altai Books, 2003.

“If you were called, in a dream, to Siberia to find some mystical tablets, would you actually go?” By a Seattle-based friend of Open Space.

Holt, John and Farenga, Pat. *Teach Your Own: The John Holt Book of Homeschooling*. Da Capo Press, 2003.

Katie, Byron. *Loving What Is: Four Questions That Can Change Your Life*. Three Rivers Press, 2003.

From the originator of The Work.

Leki, Pete. [\*How to disappear\*](#). Illustrated by Bobby Sutton. River Bank Neighbors. Web.

An inspirational how-to guide to neighborhood disorganizing.

### [Life Learning Magazine](#)

Malaclypse, Wilson, Robert Anton, Thornley, Kerry W., and Loompanics Unlimited. *Principia Discordia, Or, How I Found Goddess and What I Did to Her When I Found Her: The Magnum Opiate of Malaclypse the Younger*. Loompanics Unlimited, 1980.

An early edition of the holy book of Discordianism, a thriving modern religion centered on the idea that chaos is as important as order.

Masters, Robert Augustus. *Darkness Shining Wild: An Odyssey to the Heart of Hell & Beyond: Meditations on Sanity, Suffering, Spirituality, and Liberation*. Tehmenos Press, 2005.

By the integral psychotherapist. More at [robertmasters.com](http://robertmasters.com)

Masters, Robert Augustus. *Divine Dynamite: Entering Awakening's Heartland*. Tehmenos Press, 2006.

Owen, Harrison. *When the devil dances*. Mara Books, 1970.

Harrison’s first book. A deeply engaging photographic essay from his time as associate director of the Peace Corps in Liberia. A glimpse perhaps into the world that inspired the birth of Open Space Technology? Recalls a book that followed it, Margaret Wheatley’s *A Simpler Way*.

Nabokov, Vladimir. *Speak, Memory; An Autobiography Revisited*. G.P.Putnam's Sons, 1966.

Thought of by some as one of the most significant personal reflections by a Russian author on childhood, might we learn something here about the phenomenon of "high play?" The book opens with the sentence: "The cradle rocks above an abyss, and common sense tells us that our existence is but a brief crack of light between two eternities of darkness." Written by world literature's most notorious lepidopterist.

Mindell, Arnold. *Sitting in the Fire: Large Group Transformation Using Conflict and Diversity*. Lao Tse Press, 1995.

An essential resource for anyone who works with groups and might be remotely curious about the place and value of one's shadow in one's work. By the co-originator of process-oriented psychology, worldwork, and deep demoracy.

Oster, Grigorii. *Vrednye sovety: Kniga dlia neposlushnykh detei i ikh roditelei*. [Bad Advice: a book for Naughty Children and their Parents] Rosmen, 1994. A scandalous perestroika-era classic of Soviet children's literature, this book might be worth it just for the illustrations. From the book's "recipe" section (from the Russian): "*Bullies oven-roasted in their jackets served hot with badasses*. Reheat the badass, and once warm throw him a few bullies with smashed (fermented) noses. The bullies are usually served first and then the badasses are served peeled." Perhaps a Sunday school book for Russian children raised Discordian?

Saito, Morihiro. *Takemusu Aikido Volumes I-5: Background and basics*. Aiki News, 2007.

Shea, Robert and Wilson, Robert Anton. *The Illuminatus! Trilogy: The Eye in the Pyramid, The Golden Apple, Leviathan*. Dell, 1983.

Stavros, Jacqueline and Torres, Cheri. *Dynamic Relationships: Unleashing the Power of Appreciative Inquiry in Daily Living*. Taos Institute Publishing: 2005. A practical first book on the personal practice of Appreciative Inquiry with exercises and much, much more.

Ueshiba, Morihei. *The Art of Peace*. Shambhala, 2007.

Ueshiba, Morihei. [\*Memoirs of Morihei Ueshiba O Sensei\*](#). City Aikido. Web.

Wakhlu, Arun and Stewart, Alan. "[One Dance ... Uncovering human magnificence through conversation.](#)" Web.

A seminal paper on the deeper spiritual significance of using conversational processes and their foundation and use in uncovering spirit.

## Open Space Technology and kindred spirits

### Appreciative Inquiry

A practice, a set of design principles, an approach to facilitation and change in individuals, organization, and communities that operates from and builds on the positive core inherent in everything and everyone.

### Art of Hosting

A leadership practicum, a way of being and engaging with the world, and an approach to convening conversations that matter drawing on Open Space Technology, World Café, Appreciative Inquiry, and other practices.

Brown, Juanita and Isaacs, David with the World Café Community; Forward by Meg Wheatley, Afterword by Peter Senge. *The World Café: Shaping Our Futures Through Conversations That Matter* Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005.

Stories from the field by World Café practitioners. Includes a highly-accessible and practical guide to hosting conversations that matter using the approach.

### Byron Katie's The Work.

A simple yet powerful form of inquiry to address the source of one's suffering. Aids in coming to clarity about one's problems in life and in relationships.

### Community weaving

Described as community-scale Open Space, a powerful and promising approach to rebuilding communities drawing on the resources it already has. Originated by Seattle-based Cheryl Honey of the Family Support Network.

### Dynamic Facilitation and the Wisdom Council.

Materials by Jim Rough and colleagues on an invaluable approach to facilitation and coaching for groups and individuals. Also an essential tool in bringing back true democracy to the world. Might this also be a way to conscious, productive, and nonlinear individual and collective thinking?

### Genuine Contact Program.

Co-created by OST pioneer Birgitt Williams and her partner Ward Williams, this is an international learning program and distributed practitioner community of professionals helping organizations, communities, and individuals achieve and sustain holistic health and balance.

Genuine Contact Program. *Genuine Contact Program Session 1: Working with Open Space Technology* - This 2-hour Audio Video CD ROM set includes the training components of the Working with Open Space Technology workshop as facilitated by Birgitt Williams. The package also includes a copy of the accompanying Workbook for deeper reflection. Anyone who has completed Open Space Technology training with any facilitator can purchase a copy of the

CD ROM set. Visit <http://dalarinternational.com/cgi-bin/online/storepro.php> to purchase.

Herman, Michael. *[Inviting Organization](#)* 2002. Michael Herman. Web. An invaluable paper on Open Space practice in organizations and leadership as invitation.

Owen, Harrison. *Open Space Technology: A User's Guide*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2008.

Third edition of the classic nuts-and-bolts book on how to run an Open Space Technology meeting by the originator of the approach.

Owen, Harrison. *The Practice of Peace*. Human Systems Dynamics Institute, 2004.

Harrison swore it would be his last book. It wasn't. A very readable, engaging story of what has been learned about Open Space, especially as it relates to "peacemaking." Is Harrison saying that peace breaks out on its own? Read to find out! Available for purchase through the [Open Space Institute-USA bookstore](#).

Owen, Harrison. *[Spirit: Transformation and Development in Organizations](#)*. Potomac, MD: Abbott Publishing, 1987.

A gem of an early book on Spirit and Open Space.

Owen, Harrison. "[Understanding Open Space](#)" Open Space Institute-USA, 1999. CD-ROM.

Five audio CD's from a 1999 OST learning workshop in Seattle, USA led by Harrison Owen. A dizzying journey through Spirit and an excellent preparation for work as an OST facilitator or for muddling through the Open Space of life. Available through the Open Space Institute-USA online bookstore.

### Takemusu Aikido

#### Whole Person Process Facilitation

A very simple, powerful, and highly productive approach to working with groups offering maximum choice and maximum freedom within a preset agenda while drawing on Genuine Contact principles. Originated by Birgitt and Ward Williams , co-creators of the Genuine Contact Program

#### World Café Community

International portal for the World Café.

**Blogs exploring open space practice and more...**

[Easily Amazed](#)

[Healthy Living Rituals](#)

Heart-filled and inspirational blogs by Seattle-based OST facilitator and life/parenting coach Ashley Cooper and friends.

[Footprints in the Wind](#)

By OST facilitator and community disorganizer Doug Germann

[jack/zen](#)

Blog by Jack Ricchiuto, a Cleveland (Ohio)-based facilitator, coach, and author working with organizations and communities committed to change

[Life cultivating Life](#)

By Seattle-based OST facilitator and naturopath Christy Lee-Engel.

[MBureau International](#)

A French-language blog by Marquis Bureau, a Genuine Contact™ Program Co-Owner and Open Space practitioner living in Canada.

[Michael Herman](#)

Blog of Chicago-based OST facilitator (and webmaster for Open Space World), Michael Herman. Many Open Space and related practice resources available at his [website](#).

[Parking Lot](#)

Chris Corrigan's blog on learning, facilitation, and Open Space practice. Chris's [website](#) offers invaluable facilitation, learning, and Open Space practice resources, and links to other fascinating parts of the web.

**Other Online Open Space Resources**

[Harrison Owen's website](#)

Website of the originator of Open Space Technology. Many articles and some books available for download, includes information about programs offered by Harrison Owen and associates.

[OSlist](#)

The main electronic discussion list devoted to Open Space, with over 500 subscribers. A consistent source of lively conversation on the Open Space journey as lived and practiced. All are welcome!

[Open Space World](#)

The world portal for Open Space Technology. Lots of practical resources for those interested in working with the approach.

### [Open Space Worldscape](#)

Facilitators may list the events held in OST in this online database.

### [Open Space World Map](#)

Interactive database and map listing OST facilitators from all over the world.

### [Berlin Open Space Co-operative](#)

Worker's cooperative of Berlin-area OST facilitators.

### **Online communities that operate like Open Space**

[Genuine Contact™ Program](#)- all are welcome to [join the online conversation](#) on using the Genuine Contact™ Program in organizational health and balance. As a learning community, this is also a place also to discuss the development of the Conscious Open Space Organization.

[Linkedin](#) - online professional networking

[Xing](#) - online professional networking

[Ubuntu Community in Germany](#) - community of users of Ubuntu, an open source operating system